University of Alberta

Undergraduate Students Speak Out on Teaching, Learning and Harm

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Sociology

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 2008

Library and Archives Canada

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395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
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Direction du Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-46980-4
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-46980-4

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine the way undergraduate students talk about and make sense of teaching and learning. Twelve undergraduate students drawn from social science courses, at various points in their degree programs, were interviewed using an open-ended conversational style. Students were asked to discuss teaching, learning and the potentiality of harm in the classroom. The transcribed interviews of four of the interviewed students were subjected to three layers of interpretation using a constructivist approach. The product of the interpretive work resulted in a narrative re-telling, a re-examination of the re-telling using concepts of interaction, power and knowledge and, finally an exploration of unintended meaning using concepts from Lacanian psychoanalysis. The idea of harm, a surprising feature of teaching and learning, received intensive exploration. Knowledge gained from this study recommends continued research in advanced education that privileges the voice and subjectivity of undergraduate students.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Judith Golec

Thank you first and foremost for your courage. You could have said no to taking on another student, but you didn't and you deserve a tremendous amount of credit for helping me to produce the final work. Thank you. I would also like to thank you for your patience as I worked with my research material and found my voice as a scholar; for asking difficult questions and pushing me to be creative and think outside of myself, the theory and the material; and for not letting me jam the students into boxes that just wouldn't fit. Finally, thank you for providing me with a much greater appreciation for methodology of all kinds.

Dr. Sharon Rosenberg and Dr. jan jagodzinski

Thank you for your support and patience over the last four years. Thank you for your challenging and thoughtful questions and comments throughout the process. You have pushed me to think differently and demonstrated a great capacity to give students the space to find a place within the academy. You allowed me to demonstrate my knowledge and converse with you as both a colleague and a student.

Dr. Doug Aoki

If it were not for your encouragement and passion I would not be here. Thank you.

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List of Symbols

S_2 - Knowledge

S_1 - Master Signifier

$\$$ - Split Subject

a - petit objet a

$\$ \Diamond a$ - Fantasy

Chapter 1

Introduction

Formulating the Research Question

The voice and conceptualizations of undergraduate students within the context of the university is often overlooked in the literature. I am, therefore, interested in hearing from the often neglected undergraduate student voices that filter through the University of Alberta's campus each year. The source of this research interest is biographical in the sense that my curiosity in the topic of university education, more generally, developed out my own excitement at entering university, a place I thought would be drastically different from high school. While many of my expectations were met by the teaching and learning to which I was exposed, a number of previously unforeseeable and intriguing situations arose.

Perhaps the most vivid example comes from a story I was told as an undergraduate student by several other students, when I was in the second or third year of my undergraduate degree, about a professor they had "heard" about. This professor, according to the students, was awful; a terrible teacher who yelled at students asking pertinent questions during class and was unwilling to alter class grades even though the answers he used to mark exams clearly contradicted previous class teachings. These students also said they were aware that in previous years he had received very poor teaching evaluations from his other classes. Despite this, and numerous student complaints to faculty and department offices, the professor continued to teach.

At the time the students were relating this story I had never been exposed to this kind of teaching, but I somehow believed what they were saying, and counted myself lucky. Looking back on this recollection now it becomes difficult to know whether or not this professor

actually existed. The students, from whom I heard the story, were telling me about a student they knew in the class, perhaps one of many links in the telephone game moving information about teachers and classes around campus. But it did raise a particularly important doubt in my mind. If this professor was in fact as bad as these students claimed why had the university not stepped in and replaced him? Was it not the job and responsibility of professors to teach their students well? Most importantly, was the students' impression that their point of view on this teacher as being not taken seriously by the department and faculty accurate, since according to them this professor had not been disciplined or replaced? If it could be said that this is the case then what could the serious inclusion and consideration of students voices on their university education add to an understanding of topics such as teaching and learning?

My curiosity about the voice of the student was also pushed by a theoretical perspective to which I was exposed as an undergraduate student. Lacanian psychoanalysis focuses attention on the unconscious and language, and aligning closely with its Freudian roots, works from the premise that an others' words, speech or talk can not be taken at face value. This is because the unconscious is structured like language (Evans, 2001), and functions to conceal the true nature of individual desire. For example, is the contention of the students who told me the story of the terrible professor that he should be fired for his terrible teaching in fact accurate, or was this professor considered bad because he did not conform to their expectations of how a professor or teacher should behave? According to Lacanian theory, spoken words always carry with them a residue or an ungraspable meaning that often conflicts with that which is overtly stated. With this understanding I will utilize the Lacanian lens to examine students' talk about their experience at the university to see what possibilities for alternative inquiry exist within the residue left by their spoken words.

Based on these interests, and the undergraduates' sense that their voices were not being taken seriously, I turned to the literature on students within the university and came to realize that here too their voices were overlooked. From papers called "Are we really doing all we can for undergraduates?" (Cobb, McKinney & Saxe, 1998) to books like *The University in Ruins* (Readings, 1996) there has been no lack of academic discussion surrounding universities and university education. This literature includes institutional pieces often written by professors who have been working within universities for long periods of time and are reflecting on the changes they have witnessed (ex. Pocklington and Tupper (2002) and Readings (1996)). Other authors including Delucchi & Smith (1997), Eisenberg (1997), Lee & Brotheridge (2005), Turk (2000) and Wiesenfeld, (1996) focus on potential explanations for the changes witnessed by authors like Pocklington and Tupper (2002). One example of this is what many of these authors describe as the growing consumerist tendencies of students seeking to purchase their degrees. Survey literature can also be seen to have some overlapping similarities to the institutional literature as it too can be used to bolster comments relating to issues such as students' growing consumerism (ex. Delucchi & Korgen, 2002). However, the literature more strongly focused upon in this thesis is that which is conducted by universities, like the University of Alberta, at the end of the school year or shortly after students have graduated with their degrees demonstrating their level of satisfaction with their experience (ex. Krahn, Silzer, Ardnt, Brook, & Kernahan, 1995).

A slightly different form of literature examines more closely the experiences of individual actors in classroom or school settings. Some examples of these works include Kaplan (1993), Tompkins (1996), Friedman (1990), Wolcott (2003), Clandinin et al. (2006) and Evans (1999). Most often these works are narrative in form like Jane Tompkins' (1996)

work, which relates her understandings of her experience as a student and subsequently a professor. In this way the reader is given access to the individualized experiences and understandings of teachers, professors, administrators and students. A final form of literature approached as part of the research for this project dealing with the university and teaching and learning is critical pedagogy. This literature focuses attention on the classroom and on issues such as recognition of power differentials and introducing students to the nature of the knowledge they access and help to produce within the university classroom (Ellsworth, 1997).

The Research Question

However, none of this literature focuses specific attention on the voice of the undergraduate student from their perspectives on and personal experiences with the university. This is not to suggest that these approaches are unconcerned with the student, as survey literature, for example, even goes so far as to ask the students directly to answer pre-formulated questions and authors like Clandinin et al. (2006) have spoken directly with elementary students about their lived experiences. In each of these works, however, the voice or words of students are mediated by the lens or perspective of the researcher who, while attempting to address concerns like those of the students who told me the story about the bad teacher, was not focused primarily on the undergraduate student's voice. Instead the voice of students is often relegated to a secondary or tertiary position with respect to other teachers or administrators. As such in my research I am seeking to understand how undergraduate students make sense of their university education examining the talk they use to describe it.

This means constructivist assumptions inform my research project; that is, in undertaking the process of data collection and analysis, I am interested in how students

construct, or give meaning to, their understanding of their university experience (Crotty, 2003). This work is based on the assumption that reality is created by individual social actors and is consequently in a state of flux as these individuals negotiate meaning interactively (Bruner, 1990). As a result meanings shift or alter depending on the context or situation in which an individual is acting. Therefore, in order to glean an understanding of the symbolic meanings attached to undergraduate students' experiences of their university education it becomes important to directly collect their conceptualizations. As such a turn to individual stories or narratives is made. According to Plummer (2001) narratives represent "the most basic way [an individual has] of apprehending the world" (p. 185). Furthermore, stories are the "fundamental schemes for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite" (Pocklinghorne, 1988, p. 13). Therefore, while students are treated as individuals with unique experiences and understandings, a question remains whether or not there might be some overlap between particular aspects of the students' experiences?

In addition to permitting some constructivist assumptions to be made about this work, the breadth of my research question, which asks how students talk about their experience with university education, also allows for several smaller, but interconnected, questions to be posed. Relating more specifically to the interaction between students and professors I am also interested in how students understand and express their understanding of the teaching and learning to which they are exposed in their university classes. This articulation will then be more carefully examined to determine whether or not students' language matches the consumerist language utilized by much of the literature when referring to students. Furthermore, based on the literature reviewed and previous research conducted with

professors I was able to uncover a topic that came as a complete surprise to me as a student and one that seems to have received very little attention in the literature (Berman, 1994, 2001 and Felman, 1992). Harm, or the notion that students might be caused pain or discomfort in the classroom, is not something that is generally associated with education at any level, but an eventuality that was of great concern to professors, whom I had interviewed previously, and therefore, something I wished to explore in greater detail with students.

Each of these factors, teaching and learning, consumerism and harm, act as sensitizing concepts that give "the user a general sense of reference and guidance…[and] suggest directions along which [the researcher might] look" (Blumer, 1954, p. 7). These concepts, which developed out of my interests as an undergraduate and graduate student, through the interviews with the professors and the literature reviewed, are used to guide both the interview questions and the subsequent interpretations made of the student interviews. However, it is important to note that while I am examining the talk, language and voice of students this is not a linguistic or conversational analysis (Schwandt, 2001). Instead I will be studying the symbolically created meaning developed in a conversation between two students. That is the undergraduate student and I as a new graduate student and recently graduated undergraduate student. Given this the research questions are as follows:

- *How do undergraduate student talk about and subsequently make sense of their experience at the University of Alberta?*
    - *How do students talk about teaching and learning within the university?*
    - *Do students describe their experience in the university from the perspective of being consumers?*

- *How do students discuss the topic of harm as it relates to the university classroom?*

In an effort to gather the words of undergraduate students I decided that conducting interviews would offer the best opportunity to begin to answer the question of how they talk about their experience within the university. The decision to seek interview participants from the classes of three professors whom I had interviewed for a previous project was truly a convenience sampling[1] method, since I had already fostered a good relationship with them. This decision also offered a number of important benefits. Most importantly, it allows for the integration of my own experiences with those of the students in each of the professors' classes, in addition to connecting the conversations with the three professors to the perspectives of the students. The partial overlap of my own experience and the interview topics raised with students and professors allows for enough commonality to foster meaningful communication between the students and myself. Continuity between the professorial and students interviews also promised to be particularly important in examining the issue of harm in the classroom.

As alluded to another layer of interpretation using Lacanian psychoanalysis will also be added to the examination of the students' interviews. As a result of the fact that this theoretical perspective is based on the premise that there is always another, often hidden, meaning within spoken language its application to the student interviews serves to inquire of the alternative interpretations that could be made of student talk. Practically speaking the consideration of Lacanian psychoanalysis works to sharpen one's attention to markers in the subject's conscious speech that may hold clues to unconscious desires and fears. In so doing

[1] Convenience sampling is a method of participant recruitment that is based on the ease of access to a particular population. An example of this type of sampling can be seen in the use of undergraduate students in psychology graduate student research (Trochim, 2001).

Lacanian psychoanalysis will help to deepen the discussion of the students' experiences and understandings within the university.

Contributions

Ultimately, this works hopes to demonstrate that the voice of students makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the university experience and of the teaching and learning that occur therein. This work aims to show the importance of carefully considering the voices of students in the teaching and learning relationships established within the university. Students must be assumed to be dynamic participants in their education who have the potential to influence ongoing interactions of a classroom. As such attention focused on the meaning that students attribute to teaching and learning within the university promises to enrich our knowledge of a subject that tends to be dominated by perspectives held by teachers, professors and administrators. Finally, the application of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to an interpretation of the student interviews may serve as a caution that taking the words of an other at face value, as a self evident truth, may lead to an overly restricted interpretation of meaning and subjectivity.

Organization of Thesis

The following text is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 contains a selective review of literature that offers some direction and sensitizing concepts to the research project. This includes a selective outline of institutionally oriented works dealing with the university as a bureaucratic entity, surveys that ask undergraduate students for their opinions on the time they spent obtaining their degrees, narrative reflections which provide stories of individuals experiences with education and finally critical pedagogical texts which more specifically examine some aspects of the university overlooked by the other approaches. These particular

works were chosen to demonstrate the breadth of research that has already been conducted on the topic of universities, as well as to point out that much of this work has not asked students to use their own words in describing their experience. Finally, the literature review also contains an overview of Lacan's basic theoretical ideas, in particular, the "discourse of the university". This discussion serves to disentangle some of the dense theoretical vocabulary of which Lacan makes use.

The methodology chapter (Chapter 3) explains the research strategy, the selection of student participants and the interpretive work undertaken in the reconstruction of student interviews into narratives and patterns. It also provides some description of the application of Lacan's theoretical perspective to the interpretation of the interview material.

In Chapter 4 the students' perspectives on teaching and learning are described. Herein three levels of interpretation are attempted. The first level of interpretation is a re-telling of student interviews. In this interpretive move, I stay as close to the students own words as possible to develop a narrative of teaching and learning. The second level of interpretation involves a re-reading of the students' narratives using sensitizing concepts that emerge from a close reading that echoes some of the theoretical concepts of critical pedagogy, professor student relationships, power and knowledge. The third and final level of interpretation emerges from returning to the student narratives with attention focused on disappointments, avoidance, glossing over and inconsistencies. To these "unintended" elements of the narrative I apply a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective to render the apparently non-meaningful elements meaningful.

Chapter 5, the final substantive chapter, discusses the issue of harm in the classroom, a topic that was so intriguing it seemed to warrant a chapter of its own. As a result of my own

surprise at the possibility of such an occurrence in the university classroom and the twelve students' equal surprise it is the interviews with the professors that make up the majority of this discussion. However, after carefully examining the speech of students, using some of the theoretical concepts of Lacan, the possibility of harm begins to be disentangled.

Chapter 6 concludes this work with a summary and reflection on the project as a whole. I reconsider the research questions, potential contributions and directions for future research.

Chapter 2

Selected Literature Review

The literature review is selective and based on five approaches beginning with works that take a sociological or socio-historical perspective conceiving of the university as an institution and the student as an organizational component. This is followed by research that takes a closer look at the experiences of and satisfaction expressed by undergraduate students approached through survey methodology. Next are studies and research that often utilize narratives to examine the experiences and understandings of teachers, professors, administrators, parents and students within the education system. Then, studies of the university classroom, undertaken through the lens of critical pedagogy are reviewed. Of particular interest in this section is how the latter perspective can be utilized to gain further access to what it means to learn and teach within the university. Finally, there is an overview of some of the concepts and ideas indebted to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, which will be used to inquire of students' speech for alternative ways of understanding individual student conceptualizations of their university experience. This discussion is meant to provide a window into some of the more complicated and seemingly ambiguous language used by Lacan. Against this backdrop[2], the research project presented in this thesis asks how undergraduate students, in particular, think and talk about their university experience.

[2] Throughout this work several heterogeneous interpretive approaches are taken to the student interview material. These approaches include the identification of sensitizing concepts from the selected literatures reviewed, as well as a constructivist methodological strategy and the adoption of a Lacanian framework, each of which are in conflict on various dimensions. However, there was no attempt made to minimize these irreconcilable tensions. Instead they were utilized to keep the interpretive framework open, allowing for a more nuanced and complicated discussion of student voices to occur.

The University Conceived as an Institution

Sociological or socio-historical approaches to the university as an institution typically focus on its creation as a social organization, meaning they generally overlook the individual social actor to highlight aspects of administration and management (ex. Alexitch & Page, 2001, Alexitch & Page, 1996, Biggs, 2003, Coutrier et al., 2004, Cureton & Levine, 1998, Hassel & Lourey, 2000, Scarlett, 2004, Van Valey, 2001 and Wilms, 2002). This is not to suggest that they do not address issues of classroom interaction, teaching or learning, but these topics are discussed using a managerial perspective focusing, for example, on how administration may intervene to reduce class size or generate more revenue to fund the increasing cost of education. A great deal of this literature studies American universities. However, because my study is conducted at the University of Alberta, a Canadian institution, I have elected to review two Canadian studies that belong in the institutional tradition of research.

The first study was carried out by Bill Readings (1996), a former professor at the University of Montreal. Herein Readings combines his own observations about the university as a professor of comparative literature with experience in both Canada and the United States. Throughout the work Readings discusses what he calls the dissolution of the traditional university structure, by which he means:

> …The abandonment of the vestigial appeal to the *form* of culture as the mode of self-realization of a republican people who are citizens of a nation-state – the relinquishing of the University's role as a model of even the contractual social bond in favor of the structure of an autonomous bureaucratic corporation. (Readings, 1996, p. 35)

For Readings this represents the transition from an elite education provided to a relatively small, privileged, student body to mass education delivered to large numbers of students recruited from middle and lower-middle class families. These are students whose economic position would have previously been a barrier to university education and entry into higher paying career opportunities. Ironically this shift toward inclusiveness has, according to Readings, been accompanied by the adoption of a corporate model and culture which effectively transforms students into consumers and professors into service-providers.

Nowhere is this movement more evident, according to Readings, than in the growing use of the term "excellence" within the institutions. Excellence is a word that "develops within the university as the idea around which the university centers itself and through which it becomes comprehensible to the outside world" (Readings, 1996, p. 22). According to the author, this excellence has no real meaning, but rather is acting as a signifier[3] to which no final understanding can be attached. This transition developed as a response to the proliferation of capitalist and bureaucratic values in the West and an increased public desire to hold the university accountable for the teaching and learning that was supposed to be taking place therein. Within the university the term "excellence" has become, "a means of relative ranking among elements of an *entirely closed system*: '…universities [are afforded the] opportunity for each to clarify its own vision – and to measure itself against its peers'" (Readings, 1996, p. 27). More specifically this has meant that universities are given the opportunity to rank themselves without an outside reference, making that ranking essentially meaningless. As such the notion of excellence has integrated itself into the university in such a way that the contemporary university is no longer like a corporation "it is a corporation" and students "are not like customers; they are customers" (Readings, 1996, p. 22).

[3] The signifier can be understood as that which represents the subject for another signifier (Evans, 2001).

The apparent transition of students from learners to consumers has been documented by numerous authors including Delucchi and Smith (1997), Eisenberg (1997) and Wiesenfeld (1996). One particularly interesting study called "Correlates and Consequences of Degree Purchasing among Canadian University Students" (Lee & Brotheridge, 2005) describes students increasing determination to obtain a degree that will promise them future financial success. Of particular interest to these authors was the lack of concern they witnessed being demonstrated by students for the intrinsic value of learning. This particular theme was also addressed in "'We're the customer – we pay the tuition': Student consumerism among undergraduate sociology majors" (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002), wherein the authors discuss the results of a survey they conducted with 195 undergraduate students from a college in the United States. In this survey they found a majority of students were interested in expending the least amount of effort for the highest returns in terms of grades (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002). The authors concluded that while students are demanding more and more from professors in terms of high grades for little class work that some change needs to occur and teachers need to have "the freedom and authority necessary to motivate learners rather than focusing on merely entertaining them and assigning what students consider an acceptable grade" (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002, p. 106).

The vocabulary of excellence within the university has also reached the public consciousness as popular publications, like *Macleans* magazine, have now adopted "excellence" as part of its ranking system of Canadian universities. At the time Readings' (1996) book was written the magazine combined "categories as diverse as the make up of the student body, class size, finances and library holdings" (p. 24) into a single measure of excellence and each year high school parents and students flock to newsstands to pick up

their copy. By creating this user friendly version of a national ranking system, which utilizes a language familiar to those working in business, *Macleans* continues to be able to tap into parent and student desire, as consumers, to "get the most for their money". At the same time by using this familiar language they are able to avoid questions like "are grades the only measure of student achievement?" or "is the best university necessarily the richest one?" (Readings, 1996, p. 25). More recently, the University of Alberta along with ten other Canadian institutions, while seeming to embrace the concept of excellence have also potentially avoided these kinds of questions by collectively withdrawing their support of *Macleans'* rankings. They cited a methodological problem namely that the magazines judgments were based upon only a 12% return of surveys, and not that the magazine was avoiding the seemingly important questions outlined above (Cairney, 2006).

Overall Readings (1996) does an excellent job of mapping the growth of consumerism within Canadian institutions, as well as explaining the transition from a "university of culture"[4] (Readings, 1996, p. 12) to a university of corporate culture fixed on "excellence". However, this critique also leaves a number of questions unanswered. If students have now become consumers how do they understand the knowledge they are being provided? If students are indeed consumers, does that make professors service providers, salesmen or saleswomen, entertainers, or all three? And if professors are indeed salesmen or saleswomen does it not follow that knowledge then becomes a consumable product not unlike toothpaste or toilet paper? Of course these are philosophical questions that can not possibly be answered

[4] The notion of the "University of Culture" comes from nineteenth century German thinkers, who basically posited the university structure that has come to dominate the Western world. More specifically this term can be understood as the "synthesis of teaching and research, process and product, history and reason, philosophy and criticism…Thus the revelation of the idea of culture and the development of the individual are one. Object and process unite organically, and the place they unite is the University, which thus gives the people an idea of the nation-state to live up to and the nation-state a people capable of living up to that idea" (Readings, 1996, p. 65).

sufficiently in this work, but I am interested in discovering if students at the University of Alberta draw on the language of consumerism to describe their understanding of teaching and learning in the university.

Another work that focuses on the university as an institution is *No Place to Learn: Why Universities aren't Working*, (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002). Herein, the authors outline the major problems facing Canadian universities' desire to educate students. The argument developed by these authors, both of whom worked at the University of Alberta at one point in their careers, extends from an extensive literature search, most of which they found focused on the United States, informal interviews with colleagues and other academics and finally their own experience as professors over a period of two decades (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002).

Throughout the book, the authors address three main points. First is the proposition that undergraduate education is severely neglected. Second is the claim that cutting edge research does not lead to better teaching; in fact, it is argued that undergraduate teaching and cutting edge research are at odds with each other. Finally, the authors question the close ties growing between universities and multinational corporations (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002). Only the first two of these arguments fall directly within the scope of this thesis and therefore the remainder of the discussion about *No Place to Learn* focuses on these. However, before continuing it is important to note that other authors, such as James L. Turk in *The Corporate Campus: Commercialization and the dangers to Canada's colleges and universities* (2000) have described this growing connection between industry and the academy in more details. In this book Turk outlines the increasing drive by universities and corporations to commodify knowledge and students learning suggesting that the university as an institution is no longer

focused on educating students in the broadest sense of the term. Rather, the university is interested in moving students through their degrees as quickly as possible to facilitate the entry of more students to the university and to quickly provide corporations with an "educated" workforce.

While on the surface it would appear that the apparent neglect shown to undergraduate student education and the contention that cutting edge research leads to better teaching are distinct, they are in fact closely related to each other. Producing cutting edge research, which leads to publications and prestigious grants, demands a tremendous amount of time and resources. Consequently, attention that could theoretically, or should ideologically, be placed upon teaching is diverted. According to the authors, this leads to a serious problem in introductory level classes in particular. This is because the majority of this teaching is being done not by professors, but by "sessional lecturers", who are generally underpaid and by necessity devote a great deal of *their* time to producing research papers and publications as they attempt to secure a full-time university position (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002).

Sessional teachers, the authors point out, have little real experience teaching students since most often they have only recently graduated from PhD degrees that rarely focus on the practice and theory of teaching. Rather these programs of study privilege highly specialized knowledge and the skills required for the production of research. As a result fewer and fewer teaching professors, according to Pocklington and Tupper (2002), have the grasp of their material needed to:

> …lay out the basic principles, explain how these principles manifest themselves in various branches of the subject, understand broadly the relationship between the subject and others, [nor are they] well equipped with clear examples, and grasp both the

agreements and disagreements among practitioners of their subject so that they can answer tough questions from students. (p. 69)

However, by employing large numbers of "sessional lecturers", who lack the teaching experience required to meet the above stated goals, tenured professors are able to opt out of teaching introductory classes. Consequently they are allowed to focus their time and energy teaching specialized and advanced classes to students who have already demonstrated some aptitude for study of the particular topic. This is despite the fact that these students often lack the foundational knowledge needed to properly understand more advanced research and as the authors argue, in upper levels of undergraduate study, it is wrongly assumed that breadth of knowledge is unnecessary (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002).

Furthermore, in smaller and more advanced classes, there are fewer marking and preparation obligations which free up the tenured professors to undertake frontier research[5]. Pocklington and Tupper argue that this has led to the "myth of mutual enrichment" (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002, p. 105), which functions under that false assumption that cutting edge research and teaching demand the same kinds of knowledge. But, as they argue above, undergraduate education demands general and broad knowledge about a subject, while frontier research demands a very specific knowledge of perhaps only one or two aspects of an entire field of study (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002). Therefore, Pocklington and Tupper (2002) believe that teaching professors should be engaged in "reflective inquiry", which seeks to grasp "the history, nature and limits of [the subject], its strengths and weaknesses, and its own relationship to other subjects" (p. 58). In so doing researchers will be equipped with the broad knowledge necessary to effectively educate undergraduate

[5] Frontier research is "original research" that pushes "back the frontiers of knowledge" and is based on discovery not reflection (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002, p. 90)

students. But, according to the authors, reflective inquiry is presently out of favor in the university to the detriment of the quality of education afforded to the undergraduate population. They also go onto cite teachers' unavailability, lack of knowledge and large class sizes as other contributors to undergraduate students' lack of meaningful learning (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002).

Clearly the claims and view points of the authors discussed are not received without debate and critical response. Notwithstanding, one of the major benefits of these institutional critiques is that they allow the reader access to debates and representations of the university generally saved for insiders. For the most part institutionally focused works, like those of Pocklington and Tupper's and Readings, are written by professors who by virtue of long careers within the academy, have earned some credibility as participants who have witnessed first-hand the transformations they find startling. More generally scholars who undertake research conceptualizing the university as an institution – such as Readings and Pocklington and Tupper – generally rely on historical documents and organizational informants as primary source materials. As a consequence, undergraduate students are an important component of this research, but remain unrepresented as a category of study. The actual voices or views of undergraduate students are not heard. If undergraduate students were invited to talk, in their own words, about their university experience how would they represent teaching and learning? Will their voices reflect the language and critique of Readings or Pocklington and Tupper? Or will their voices point to different concerns, formulations and considerations? Upon examination, will the language undergraduate students' use depict students as consumers, knowledge as a means to an end, and professors as sales people? And how will they speak of the professor-student relationship? In my

research project, I gain access to the voices of undergraduate students unmediated by an institutional or organizational studies frame.

Student Satisfaction/University Performance through Survey Methodology

Surveys are given to students at various points in their university careers in an attempt to gather information about their experience. These represent another major source of data for scholars interested in the study of universities. This methodology has also permeated the popular media with a "University Student Issue" being published by *MacLean's* magazine (2008). In this edition 610 universities from across Canada are ranked by student responses to two surveys (the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium), to enable prospective students to have a greater understanding of things like student-faculty interaction, collaborative learning and campus environment (Farran and Keller, 2008). Some of the benefits of survey methodology derive from the fact that surveys provide access to a large number of students as they are often sent out to hundreds and sometimes thousands of potential respondents. They are also typically composed of questions with pre-formulated response categories provided. [6] For example, some questions require simple yes or no answers, while others supply between five and seven response categories that are ordered in a Likert-type scale[7]. Each of these responses is then given a numeric value, a statistic that the researcher can use to make comparisons between responses to different questions or categories. As such surveys enable researchers to provide their

[6] For example question #26: "Why did you choose to attend the University of Alberta (instead of some other university)? How important were each of the following? a. Location, b. Quality of program etc (1. very unimportant to 5. very important) (Krahn et al., 1995, Appendix p. 7). Question #28: "The following questions are phrased as statements and relate to the instruction you received in your program. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these statements using a 5-point scale where one means "strongly-disagree", 2 is "disagree", 3 is "neither agree nor disagree", 4 is "agree" and 5 is "strongly agree"". a. Content was organized, b. concepts were clearly explained etc. (Krahn & Sorensen, 1999, Appendix 1).

[7] The Likert scaling system is one that allows a researcher to measure the difference between potential responses for survey questions (Babbie, 2005).

audience with accessible and practical results in the form of percentages and ratios which can be easily taken up by committees and policy makers when dealing with matters like registration, satisfaction or funding allocation.

Every year across North America surveys, like those mentioned above and many more (for example, the 2007 Student Satisfaction Survey: Penn State Student Affairs (http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara/satisfaction.shtml)) are conducted, in attempts to determine the level of student satisfaction with the education they have been provided. For similar reasons as stated earlier my review of literature in this section also focuses on surveys conducted in Canada and more specifically at the University of Alberta. The first survey of interest was administered to all students who convocated in the spring of 1995: 1349 completed surveys were returned which represented 32% of graduands. While this survey deals with a wide variety of topics including general satisfaction of university experience to skill acquisition and job placement, of particular interest to this project are students' responses to questions dealing with teaching and learning. Over two thirds of the students surveyed "considered their undergraduate programs to have been stimulating, enriching and enjoyable" (Krahn et al., 1995, p. ii). More specifically 69% of respondents believed that instructors displayed a positive attitude towards them (vs. 63% in 1992) and, 70% felt that they were treated with respect (vs. 62% in 1992) (Krahn et al., 1995). Furthermore, approximately 60% of the students believed that their instructors had taken an interest in their learning (vs. 54% in 1992), with 49% and 59% of students feeling that instructors made efforts to ensure that students were learning, and actively encouraged participation in class (Krahn et al., 1995).

Another survey of interest was the 1999 version of a province-wide survey conducted every two years with both graduate and undergraduate students (Krahn & Sorensen, 1999).

This particular survey was conducted with all students eligible for graduation between March and April of that year. Of the 11, 486 surveys that were disseminated, 7, 056 were returned for a 61% response rate. This survey was conducted in several post-secondary institutions across Alberta resulting in some significant differences between the responses of university and university college students on a number of the indicators used; however, most of these are due to the relative differences in size between the two types of institutions. The values reported here are amalgamations of university and university college scores. Of this group of respondents 70% reported that their program had provided them with in depth knowledge about their field of study, 82% felt that they have improved their opportunities for continuing their education and 84% felt that they had improved themselves personally (Krahn & Sorensen, 1999, p. 2). When asked about the quality of teaching between 15% and 17% of students reported being "very satisfied", while the majority of the remaining students reported feeling "somewhat satisfied" (51-61%) (Krahn & Sorensen, 1999). Furthermore, 80% of students agreed that the content of their class was well organized and 71% felt that the material had been explained clearly. Students reported slightly lower numbers when asked whether or not the classroom presentations were interesting and enthusiastic, with 58% and 66% agreeing respectively (Krahn & Sorensen, 1999).

As can be seen by the proceeding numbers, for the most part students in Alberta rate their university or university college experience as being quite high and seemingly having improved over time, even when looking back only four years. However, there are a number of drawbacks to relying solely on this type of data. The questions asked in surveys are "broad indicators", which means that they are designed "as measures of accountability…for external audiences, [and] tend to provide limited information about ways to improve institutional

functioning" (Donald & Denison, 1996, p. 23). Therefore, they are not produced as potential templates for the improvement of the classroom situation, but are intended to demonstrate the institutions overall performance for the year. Additionally, these surveys are designed and written by researchers using research generated vocabulary and not the words of students. As such the issue surrounding the ability of words to transmit a finite meaning becomes questionable as the possibility for a student to understand exactly what it is the researcher intends is uncertain. Also, the researchers cannot judge what the student meant to communicate when selecting one of the response categories.

Turning back to the work of Readings (1996), and Pocklington and Tupper (2002), there is an obvious discrepancy between what these professors are experiencing and observing and what students seem to understand about their university education as demonstrated in the surveys. According to Pocklington and Tupper (2002) the largest reason for this difference comes from the fact "that students arrive at university with no concrete expectations about what higher education is, [but only] expect that it is somehow tougher than high school, partly because professors are "smarter"…" (p. 76). While this certainly represents a possible explanation for the difference in findings between these two types of literature, what is more important for this work is unwrapping more of these slips between understandings of the professors and students, using their own language, and their particular understandings of teaching and learning.

A first step in this direction has been taken by Richard J. Light who wrote, *Making the Most of College; Students Speak Their Minds* (2001), wherein he describes findings from 1600 in-depth interviews conducted with undergraduate students from Harvard University. Students were asked open-ended questions, such as, where they felt they accomplished the

best learning, what kinds of classes they found the most effective and how diversity on campus affected their overall experience (Light, 2001). A statistician by profession, Light discovered that in-depth interviews provided a different and perhaps more clear form of knowledge that could have just as much "face validity"[8] as any statistical report (Light, 2001). These interviews provided Light with results that surprised him as, for instance, it was his initial thought that students would identify the classroom as the location where their most meaningful learning took place; however it was outside interactions with other students and mentors that students identified as being the most important (Light, 2001). Furthermore, the students with whom he spoke stated that they preferred classes that were highly structured, with lots of small homework assignments and quizzes, as this gave them the opportunity to improve their work before being assessed their final grade, as opposed to classes in which students were left to do a great deal of their learning independently (Light, 2001). As a result of the admitted surprise that Light expressed regarding student responses I would suggest that had it not been for the open ended interview format, wherein students were able to answer the questions in their own words, this new revelation of what Harvard students thought about their university education would not have been discovered.

In a similar methodological move as that taken by Light (2001), I also chose open ended interviewing in an attempt to obtain the voice of students directly. However, there are important differences between the aims of Light's study and my own. First, Light's sample was very large (N=1600). Second, the reason for large numbers is that Light needed a large sample to claim representation and generalizeability. Third, the aim of Light's study was to influence post-secondary educational policy. This was a particular goal he and his colleagues

[8] Face validity can be understood as that quality of an indicator that makes it seem a reasonable measure of some variable (Babbie, 2005, p. 483).

set out to accomplish prior to beginning their project (Light, 2001). My work, however, is exploratory, out of necessity due to time constraints as well as the expectation of a narrow focus for a Masters thesis. The high level of face validity, in Light's work, also allows for cautious generalizations to other students in other institutions. Again this was something my work has been unable to accomplish, but because my aims are more modest, I elected to do an exploratory project with an interest in studying the views of a small number of undergraduate students drawn from particular courses offered in the social sciences. My objective is to engage students in a dialogue about their educational experience, in particular, the way they think and talk about teaching and learning.

Narrative Reflections on Education

The following works take a very distinctive step away from the kinds of outcomes associated with institutional and survey research. Instead of focusing on the purely structural component of the institution or the satisfaction experienced by students, these works focus on individual participants. Some examples of these types of works include Kaplan (1993) and Tompkins' (1996) bibliographic examinations of their journey to become professors within the academy and Friedman (1990), Wolcott (2003), Clandinin et al. (2006) and Evans' (1999) whose research explores the lived experiences of teachers, principals, students and parents. Unlike the previous literature the focus of these works seems to be the individual, who functions within an educational institution.

Of particular value to my interest in the voice of students was the research conducted by Clandinin et al. (2006). In an effort to better understand the diverse identities of students and teachers within the classroom, she and her colleagues, visited two elementary schools in Western Canada, incorporating themselves into the classroom environment of several

different grade levels. As part of the project the researchers engaged in classroom activities, observed interactions, and spoke with students, teachers, principals and parents in an effort to better understand the overall atmosphere of the school community. Some of the researchers held reading groups over lunch hour periods and conducted one-on-one interviews with students at various points during the year in which they observed the schools. During these interactions with students the researchers attempted to gain a clearer picture of how these children understood themselves within the overall story of the school.

The ultimate goal of this research was to begin to reformulate current thinking of school environments in a way that would allow for alternative explanations to be created. The authors paid particular attention to "bumping places", where the identity stories of students and teachers conflicted with the larger story of the school itself. One example of a bumping place came from a student named James, who was identified by his teachers, parents and professionals as having a number of learning disabilities, but chose to identify himself as capable and confident (Clandinin et al., 2006). During the lunch hour reading sessions with the researcher James extrapolated the books and characters the group was reading to adventures he would be having in the future (ex. becoming a surfer) (Clandinin et al., 2006). Consequently, he experienced some difficulty in integrating himself into the stories others had created for him and thereby further exacerbated the adults' contention that he had problems with school.

Another work, written by Jane Tompkins (1996), a professor from Duke University, is an autobiographical reflection on her experience with the education system as both a student and teacher over the course of her life. She tells the story of being a young child in elementary school, learning less overt rules about pleasing the teacher and demonstrating

one's knowledge, going on to describe becoming a high achieving university undergraduate and graduate student and finally a successful professor. The tone of her work is critical as she has come to see through her experience that the American education system does not function to educate the entire body of the student (the mind and the soul), but only those parts that ensure good grades and financial success in the future (Tompkins, 1996). Moreover, she feels that students are disconnected from both the internal and external worlds, existing in a kind of limbo between the world outside the university and their sense of self. Some of these observations were confirmed when she spoke informally with a number of her students.

In one instance a student, who had been accepted to a prestigious medical school, bitterly said of his undergraduate education, "I used Duke and Duke used me…Learning is second. Achievement is first" (Tompkins, 1996, p. 217). This student by any standard was a success story, achieving high grades and giving himself the opportunity for future financial success. But he was not happy or satisfied and felt used by the process through which he had gone on to attain that success. Therefore, based on these observations and a careful examination of her lived experiences, Tompkins ultimately advocates an alteration of university education such that students and professors are recognized as whole beings, not simply a mind in need of knowledge (Tompkins, 1996). More specifically in terms of learning she also states that the goal of education should be to teach students mechanisms they could use to cope with their lives, not simply to fill them with information.

Interestingly, both of these works make some effort to speak with students. In Clandinin's (2006) research she and her colleagues spoke directly with elementary students about their sense of self and Tompkins (1996) informally spoke with undergraduate students who had taken her classes. However, in neither of these works is the voice of the student

central. In the first students' voices are mixed and become mingled with voices of their teachers, administrators and parents, as the authors build a composite vision of the school community. Additionally, students from this research were very young and unlike university students may lack the maturity and capacity to internalize and then articulate their experience with the same degree of nuance. In Tompkins' (1996) work the undergraduate students with whom she had contact are only a small part of the story she weaves. Her story focuses on the personal struggles and insights she is able to make by closely examining her own life. Looking back to the first two kinds of literature examined these works certainly make further strides in the direction of recognizing the voice of students. However, in each of these works students' voices are secondary to a research agenda which focuses on other aspects of education.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is a term that can be applied to a wide variety of texts (ex. Felman, 1997; hooks, 1994; Kelly, 1997; Williams, 1991; Freire, 1993; Simon, 1992; Solomon, 1997) and consequently has been utilized in a wide variety of fashions. Therefore, I begin here with the meaning of the term. Pedagogy is generally understood as "the central activity in the education system" (Lusted, 1988, p. 2), students go to school to learn and teachers apply pedagogical strategies to teach. But this meaning has become devoid of any critical aspect, being understood as the simple transmission of taken for granted knowledge between the teacher and the pupil. However, according to David Lusted (1988) pedagogy is much more than this, as it:

> Draws attention to the process through which knowledge is produced. Pedagogy addresses the 'how' questions involved not only in the transmission or reproduction of

> knowledge but also in its production…[I]t enables us to question the validity of separating these activities so easily by asking under what conditions and through what means we 'come to know'. (p. 3)

Applying this understanding of teaching becomes something potentially transformative as teachers or professors are not only transmitting knowledge, but more importantly are training students to understand how that knowledge is produced. Furthermore, critical pedagogy can also then become a technique that aims for students "to become aware of their present identity components, of repressed qualities that could become new aspects of identity and of the consequences of both types of elements for themselves and for others" (Bracher, 2006, p. 102). This is possible because an understanding of the production of academic knowledge also applies to the production of all types of knowledge including knowledge of the self. As such it might be suggested that the goal of teachers, who work within this approach, is to "help students understand (1) the nature and origins of their own identity components, (2) the consequences of these components for themselves and others and (3) the nature, potential source, and likely consequences of alternative identity components that they might embrace or pursue" (Bracher, 2006, p. 103). In these ways critical pedagogy's aim is to provide students with the tools necessary to create "absolute difference"[9] between themselves and their teacher. With this understanding, critical pedagogy is that which "illuminates the relationship among knowledge, authority and power" (Giroux, 1994, p. 30).

Relating specifically to the topic of this thesis, I find Elizabeth Ellsworth's text called *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy and the Power of Address* (1997) to be very

[9] The term "absolute difference" relates to the analytic situation in which the process of analysis leads the analysand to take on the desires of the analyst. In the proper analytic relationship it is not the desire of the analyst for the analysand to take on their first order desires, or their ego, ego-ideal or jouissance, but to take on the first order desires that reside within them as the analysand (Bracher, 2006).

enlightening. In this text Ellsworth, using some of the theories proposed in Lacanian psychoanalysis taken up by other authors, discusses what it means to practice critical pedagogy in the classroom identifying, in the first half of the book, four paradoxes of teaching. The four paradoxes are: "the unconscious makes teaching impossible, yet we teach and learn", the teacher's authority lies in "textual knowledge", but does not know what it knows, the only form of self reflection is "self-subversive" and finally teaching is not about joining us together "it's about engaging in the ongoing production of culture in a way that returns yet another difference" (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 139).

The second half of the book engages each of these paradoxes further in an effort to set up a template for how to integrate critical pedagogical thinking into the classroom. Her notion of "ignore-ances" is especially provocative. The term originates with Shoshana Felman, who wrote a chapter for the book *Learning Desire: Perspectives on Pedagogy, Culture and the Unsaid*, called "Psychoanalysis and Education: Teaching Terminable and Interminable" (1997), in which she looks at how psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan understood teaching and learning. For Felman ignorance[10] does not represent a lack of understanding, but rather "an active dynamic of negation, an active refusal of information" (Felman, 1997, p. 25). That is students, for example, who receive a poor grade in a class assignment might in fact be seen as making an unconscious choice to disregard the information provided to them through the teacher's instruction. However, this resistance to accept the knowledge of the teacher does not originate from the student's potentially disagreeable nature, but as a result of the threat that knowledge provides to their identity.

[10] "Ignore-ances", as utilized by Ellsworth can be likened to the usage of "ignorance" by Felman, however it was Ellsworth who created the form of the first term to emphasize the notion that subjects were actively "ignoring" certain subject matter, not demonstrating some lack of knowledge.

An example of this refusal can be seen in Jeffery Berman's book *Diaries to an English Professor: Pain and Growth in the Classroom* (1994), in which one of his students relates in his class journal, a writing assignment which was a required component of the class, a story told to him by a friend who belonged to a fraternity. In this story the fraternity member describes bringing a woman to his room, during a party, where they engaged in sexual activities. At some point during the sexual encounter a group of his "brothers" stepped out from their hiding place in a closet, naked, and began shouting as if they were cheering on a rodeo rider. Apparently the object of this exercise was for the first man to see how long he could hold onto the woman before she escaped the room. Interestingly, throughout the entire retelling of these events the writer did not mention the word "rape" until the very end, despite the fact that it was a topic of discussion taken up by the class on several occasions (Berman, 1994). In fact, he went to great lengths to describe the "normality" of those involved saying "these aren't lowlife degenerates; these were all wealthy, middle-class boys" (Berman, 1994, p. 201). The neglect by the student writer in identifying this action as rape may be related to his identification with the frat members. That is by acknowledging that the frat members raped the woman, he would be forced to potentially recognize his own interactions with women as being inappropriate.

However, a psychoanalytic reading would suggest the actions of the student writer of this story are in no way a conscious decision. He was not aware that he was protecting his sense of self by not identifying the men from his story as rapists. Instead he enacted a defense mechanism. This action by the student, according to Lacan is the very definition of the unconscious as the acknowledgement of the girl's rape was "knowledge which [could not] tolerate one's knowing that one knows" (as cited in Felman, 1997, p. 24). Therefore, by this

understanding of the unconscious it might be assumed the writer unconsciously understood the actions of the frat members as rape, but chose to "ignore" them because the writer could not endure the implication of his sense of self in this knowledge. Thus, he avoided the use of the word in retelling the story (Felman, 1997).

More generally critical pedagogy takes into consideration a complex vision of the university by focusing on the classroom as the study site and by accounting more fully for the subtle interactions between students and professors. In addition, this approach begins to address power and authority through concepts like "ignore-ances". There are, however, a number of potential drawbacks that can be associated with using it as the sole approach to understanding the university classroom. According to Bracher, while it seems that critical pedagogy "has the desire for absolute difference", meaning that the teacher using this technique desires "that [students] develop and enhance their own identities, which will be fundamentally different from hers in multiple ways" (Bracher, 2006, p. 101), in practice this might not be the case. Often critical pedagogy tends to equate "identity with social position, which is largely a function of the socially determined signifiers of group identity" (Bracher, 2006, p. 105). For instance consider a feminist critical pedagogy, whose intention is to emancipate women, but is often taught from the position of white middle class instructors, who may neglect issues of differences in race, class, nationality and sexual orientation (Bracher, 2006). As such the unintended result is the production of a group of feminists whose only access to feminism comes from the position of white middle class women overlooking issues such as those described above. This type of teaching may ultimately have an alienating effect on those women, who do not identify as white or middle class, and potentially induce the defense reaction "ignore-ance" outlined above.

Therefore, while critical pedagogy has the potential to recognize the complexity of interactions between participants within places like the university classroom it also has the potential to overlook individual motivations and "ignore-ances" of those involved. Another drawback can also be found in the lack of direct comment from students participating in critical pedagogical classrooms, as often these scholarly writings focus on highly theoretical abstractions of the interactions between students and professors. Consequently, this is a space where Lacanian psychoanalysis as a theoretical perspective (Berman, 2001; Bracher, 2006; Brooke, 1987; Donahue & Quandahl, 1987; Schleifer, 1987)[11], can prove useful in more specifically approaching the individual/subject in the context of social interactions.

One author that begins to make strides in the direction of considering both individual and social components in classroom relations is Douglas Sadao Aoki, who wrote a critical essay "The Price of Teaching: Love, Evasion and Subordination in the Classroom" (2002), inspired by Lacanian psychoanalysis. Within the context of the article Aoki puts forth some very interesting possible relations between Lacan and teaching. He begins the essay with a basic critical idea: "the fundamental gesture of teaching is to evade reading" (Aoki, 2002, p. 26). Reading, as Aoki understands "reading" is not to be mistaken for that banal form engaged in while casually looking at the morning paper or whilst enthralled in the subplot of a thriller novel. Instead the kind of reading Aoki refers to is one to which the reader must devote all of their attention. This type of reading demands that the reader be an active participant. Reading wherein one must attempt with every turn of the page to appreciate something of the words that pass beneath their eyes and ultimately come to the understanding that a real comprehension of the authors' intention is not possible. This reading forces the

[11] As with the other sections of the literature review the volume of works dealing with Lacanian psychoanalysis is enormous, as such only a small selection of these works will be dealt with in-depth.

reader to move beyond the taken for granted nature of knowledge to see it as something "unnatural and constructed" (Jay, 1987, p. 792).

Furthermore, Aoki asserts that teaching, as it is presently formulated and practiced, does not aim at the creation of the absolute difference, necessitated by the aforementioned reading practice, but instead "aims [at]… having every student in the classroom learn exactly the same thing" (Aoki, 2002, p. 30) in the exact manner that information was understood by the professor. Presently, this goal is accomplished with the help of textbooks whose job it is "to communicate knowledge as accurately, completely, systematically and clearly as possible" (Aoki, 2002, p. 30). Unfortunately, according to Aoki, this archaic form of information transmission can not rid students of the need to think as they read leaving teachers with the impossible task of ensuring students understand their (the teacher's) version of the knowledge. This leaves an interesting consideration: might students speaking openly comment on teaching and learning in ways that resonate with Aoki's or Ellsworth's concepts?

Another author that works with Lacan's theories and writings, taking the individual and the social context into consideration, is Shoshana Felman. She feels, as already alluded to, that teachers ought not to be concerned with a lack of knowledge, but like analysts, instead focus upon "resistances to knowledge" (Felman, 1997, p. 26). This means that a reconsideration of what knowledge entails needs to be undertaken. According to Felman, who borrows from Lacan's notion of "textual knowledge"[12], knowledge "is not a substance but a structural dynamic: it is not contained by any individual, but comes about out of the mutual apprenticeship between two partially unconscious speeches which say more than they

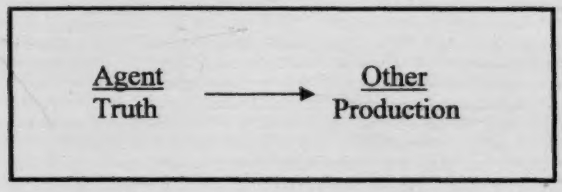
[12] "Textual knowledge … is knowledge of the functioning of language, of symbolic structures, of the signifier, knowledge at once derived from – and directed towards – interpretation" (Felman, 1997, p. 27)

know" (Felman, 1997, p. 29). That is knowledge is not something to be attained, but a process through which one moves to gain insight into a topic. Knowledge can not be attained without an other, it is an interactive process, and this other is needed to delve into the unconscious knowledge/resistances individuals alone are unable to reach. In this way gaining knowledge or learning is a process that can never be completed as the teacher "teaches nothing other than the way he learns" (Felman, 1997, p. 34) and in turn attempts to "learn from the students his own knowledge" (Felman, 1997, p. 29). Therefore the student's "knowledge" is left in the hands of the teacher and the teacher's "knowledge" is wrapped up in the student's conceptualization of what has transpired in the classroom. These two forces will be forever inalienable as one's knowledge depends entirely on that of an other's. As such it is the process through which the knowledge of the other is internalized that becomes of real importance, making content secondary. Leaving me again to wonder: If asked to speak freely will students associate their experience and learning with ideas like resistance? How do students apprehend knowledge: as process, content, fact or something else?

Mark Bracher wrote a piece called "On Psychological and Social Functions of Language: Lacan's Theory of the Four Discourses" (1994). I found Bracher's writing to make the rather archaic and ambiguous language of Lacan accessible to novices. Therefore, I am indebted to Bracher's essay for much of my understanding of what I term Lacanian psychoanalysis. I offer here a primer on Lacanian psychoanalytic theory based largely on Bracher's essay. His essay starts with a diagram which charts the "differing roles or positions occupied by the four psychological functions"[13] (Bracher, 1994, p. 109):

[13] The psychological functions or factors are "Knowledge/belief, values/ideals, self-division/alienation, and jouissance/enjoyment" (Bracher, 1994, p. 109).

Figure 1. Four Psychological Functions



On the left hand side of the arrow are the dominant positions. The "agent" and "truth" positions are in control of what the other positions are exposed to as they also act as the senders of information to be consumed by the subject (the right side of the arrow). On the right hand side of the arrow, therefore, is the subject receiving the information provided via the dominant positions. Above the lines separating "agent" from "truth" and "other" from "production" we have the overt or manifest factor. More specifically these are the factors which a subject might have access to in their conscious mind. Beneath the lines lie the covert or latent factors, which the subject likely would not have access to on a conscious level. An example of this can be seen within the classroom as the student would see the teacher (or professor) as being the one in control of the knowledge the student is seeking when in actuality it is the bureaucracy of the institution to which the student and professor belong that influences the knowledge reaching them.

Bracher then goes through each of Lacan's four discourses, created by Lacan as a means to "analyze the crucial factors through which language exercises both formative and transformative power over human affairs. More precisely…the four discourses offer the means, respectively, of understanding four key social phenomena: educating, governing, protesting and revolutionizing" (Bracher, 1994, p. 107). While Lacan did not create these discourses specifically for their use in understanding the university as an institution, Bracher

has begun this process, which I will take a step further by wedding student talk directly with these discourses. Bracher begins with the "discourse of the university", which he characterizes as being purely bureaucratic in its form and function as "it is nothing but knowledge" (Bracher, 1994, p. 115). Within this system "the student is in the position of the exploited", and this torments students, however, it is not "that the knowledge they are given isn't structured and solid, but that there is only one thing they can do: namely weave themselves in with their teachers and thus serve as both the means of production and surplus value of the system" (Bracher, 1994, p. 116). More specifically students are forced to inculcate themselves into a system that leaves them a single avenue for participation. Looking at Lacan's semi-mathematical diagram (refer to Figure 2) and beginning in the top left hand corner we can see S_2 (knowledge), which I have labeled the professor, or the "subject supposed to know"[14]. Moving to the right one space is the objet petit a[15], which I have understood to be the student in excess[16] of the system of knowledge produced by the "symbolic order of the university". For example, I entered the university with the expectation that my classes would be engaging and that there would be a tremendous amount of discussion, but this desire could not be accommodated. This meant that for me, as a student,

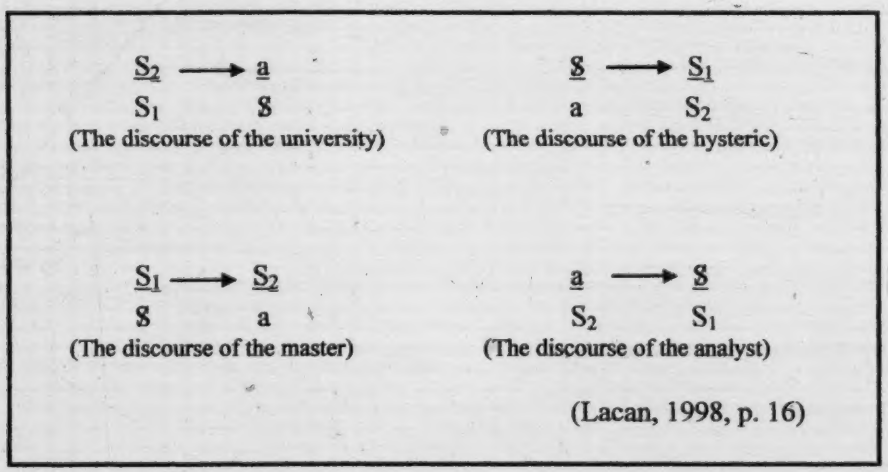
[14] The "subject supposed to know", is the person in whom the student, in this case, sees all of the knowledge they feel will enable them to become whole persons (Evans, 2001).

[15] More specifically the petit objet a is "the remnant left behind by the introduction of the symbolic in the real" (Evans, 2001, p. 125) and can be thought of as an excess of jouissance, which is "painful pleasure" (Evans, 2001, p. 92) or the pleasure that occurs when the subject has transgressed the pleasure principal. An example of this can be seen in students who cling tightly to the class rules and are subsequently unable to deal with transgressions by others.

[16] The term excess can be understood as that part of the student that is unable to assimilate into the symbolic order of the university. For example consider the first year student that seeks to continually challenge the knowledge held by the professor, by asking numerous questions, as they attempt to assert their previous subject position into this new symbolic order. While these students after time come to be able to recreate their subject position to "fit into" the new symbolic order excess always exists within the individual.

to enter into the symbolic order of the university, and gain its inherent benefits, I had to put aside this desire and accept the symbolic order in its present formulation.

Figure 2. Four Discourses



(Lacan, 1998, p. 16)

Beneath the objet petit *a* is the 8 (the split subject), which also represents the student, but one who is missing a portion of their identities. Through the giving up a part of the self (i.e. excesses) the student's entry into the symbolic order of the university[17] is permitted. Making one more move to the left is the master signifier (S_1) that can be understood in two ways. First it is the position from which the teacher receives their instructions for the use of the knowledge they possess and second it is the place from where students receive contrary information regarding their excesses. The master signifier also falsely allows students to think that it can accommodate excesses like those I described above further entreating them to enter into this symbolic order. The master signifier dictates how knowledge is consumed and produced, as it works to maintain its control over subjects. However, this control is not

[17] The symbolic order of the university represents the entire system of the university, from students up to administrators and may be likened to the master signifier.

overt but works on the unconscious level and in this way can be likened to the *Men in Black* (1997). Like these fictional characters who work to save the world from alien invasion, without the general public's knowledge, so too does the master signifier exert its influence over the professor's knowledge and the students' actions, without their conscious comprehension.

The "discourse of the master" (refer to Figure 2), "promotes consciousness, synthesis and self equivalence by instituting the dominance of master signifiers (S_1), which order knowledge (S_2) according to their own values" (Bracher, 1994, p. 117). According to Lacan the basic structure can be found in many different fields and disciplines including teaching which "begins as a discourse of mastery, with the imposition of the basic concepts of a discipline – master signifiers that serve to ground and explain the procedure or body of knowledge that constitutes the discipline" (Bracher, 1994, p. 118). The "discourse of the hysteric", however, "is in force whenever a discourse is dominated by the speaker's symptom", that is, when there is a failure of the subject ($) to come in line with or be "satisfied by the master signifiers offered by society and embraced as the subject's ideal" (Bracher, 1994, p. 122). Perhaps the best example of this discourse can be seen in past revolutions as participants rebelled against the reigning master signifiers, but according to Lacan were simply looking for a "new master".

A potential remedy for many of the problems associated with the other discourses can be found in the "discourse of the analyst" as it "offers the only ultimately effective means of countering the psychological and social tyranny exercised within language" (Bracher, 1994, p. 123). It puts the subject in the position of "assuming and enacting the $" (Bracher,1994, p. 123) meaning they come to consciously recognize that they will forever be split subjects,

which thereby allows them the freedom to create signifiers that fit more closely to their subjectivity.

Lacanian Subjectivity

With the discourses outlined in brief, the remainder of this chapter addresses how Lacanian psychoanalysis understands the creation of subjectivity, an important theoretical concept in understanding how students and professors place themselves within the symbolic order of the university. In so doing Lacan's theories will provide an alternative lens through which to read the students' interviews allowing for a broadening of understandings surrounding their comprehensions of the university and the teaching and learning that occur therein. Lacanian psychoanalysis posits that personhood begins not with actual birth, but with the recognition of the individual by other people. That is individual subjectivity is based upon a recognition by, interaction with and demand for love from others, effectively "decentering" subject-hood from the singular person to society (Sharpe, 2006). When the baby sees itself in a mirror[18] or in the eyes of their primary caregiver (the other) it witnesses their *specular image* or that image that is both them and other (Evans, 2001). Practically speaking in this moment the infant sees its entire being, as if it were looking in a full length mirror, and this image shows the infant as being whole, which allows it to surmise that it has complete control over its surroundings. In this moment of alienation[19] and imaginary identification [i(o)] or "identification with an image in which we appear likeable to ourselves …representing 'what we would like to be'" (Zizek, 1989, p. 105), that the ideal-ego is formed. This concept represents the "promise of future synthesis towards which the ego

[18] This process is also known as the Mirror Stage in psychoanalytic terms (Lacan, 2000).
[19] Consequence of the mirror stage as the subject becomes divided through its inception into the imaginary order.

tends, the illusion of unity on which the ego is built" (Evans, 2001, p. 52). More specifically it is at this moment that the infant reconstitutes itself as whole rather than a number of disparate body parts. This bodily restoration is lacking, however, as the *specular image* does not represent the reality of the infant's inability to have control over its body (Lacan, 2004).

Upon the completion of this stage, wherein the mother and baby have formed their dyadic bond, the infant must now move into the next stage. This transition is necessary as within the imaginary order[20], outlined above, the infant falls prey to narcissistic tendencies that have it developing an erotic attraction to its *specular image* (Evans, 2001). As a consequence the infant mistakenly sees itself as a complete being and not alienated. In addition to this the baby is also victim of an "aggressive tension between the specular image and the real body since the wholeness of the image seems to threaten the body with disintegration and fragmentation" (Evans, 2001, p. 6). It is through the introduction of language and its laws that the baby is inaugurated into the symbolic order, which represents the next stage of development. These laws stop narcissistic and aggressive tendencies, as they introduce prohibitions on the subject's behavior. Therefore, the symbolic order is tied to language.[21] For this transition to take place the infant must undergo a symbolic identification or "identification with the very place from where we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves likeable, [and] worthy of love" (Zizek, 1989, p. 105). Thereby, the infant develops the ego-ideal [I(o)] which is the "internal plan of the law, the guide governing the subject's position in the symbolic order" (Evans, 2001, p. 52). This demands the infant internalizes the

[20] The imaginary order is "the order of surface appearances which are deceptive, observable phenomenon which hide underlying structure" (Evans, 2001, p. 82).
[21] Language is "seen primarily as a mediating element which permits the subject to attain recognition from the other" (Evans, 2001, p. 96).

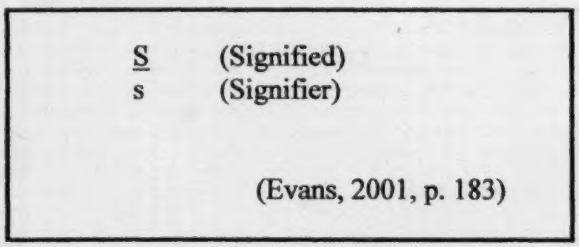
"big Other"[22] a fundamental component of the symbolic order, which designates a "radical alterity" to language that can not "be assimilated through identification" (Evans, 2001, p.133). This "big Other" can come to represent any number of people within the life of the infant, however, it resides in the unconscious[23], as the law or superego, of the subject, meaning that the identity of whomever this "big Other" comes to stand in for is not readily available to the conscious side of the individual. Ostensibly speaking the big Other[24] is that entity towards which the infant directs its behavior, but from which it can never gain satisfaction.

The symbolic order, which also resides in the unconscious of the individual, might be thought of as the society into which the infant is being introduced. As the name suggests, Lacan has come to understand, through Mauss and Levi-Strauss, that society itself is made up of symbols (Evans, 2001). Within North American culture, and the majority of others across the globe, one of the most basic and perhaps taken for granted, symbols are words. Since words are the component factors of language, and language makes up the law an outline of the mechanisms of language becomes important. Lacan's description of the function of language within societies is relatively complex, but for the purposes of this project it will suffice to simply discuss the role of the signifier. This term was actually borrowed from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of the sign, whose basic parts are the signified and the signifier (Hall, 1997). The signified is the conceptual form of the object (ex. compact music player) while the signifier represents the material form of the object (ex. Walkman™) (Hall, 1997, p. 31). For Saussure, however, the signified and signifier were mutually

[22] The "big Other" represents the fundamental split inherent in all subjects (Evans, 2001).
[23] According to Lacan the unconscious is a linguistic structure which represents the "effects of the signifier on the subject, in that the signifier is what is repressed and what returns in the formations of the unconscious" and "is the determination of the subject by the symbolic order" (Evans, 2001, p. 218)
[24] From here on out I will refer to the "big Other" as simply the Other, capitalized.

exclusive entities, meaning that there is no inherent connection between them so the Walkman™ would not always be the name of the compact music player. For instance consider the shift in the naming from the tape playing Walkman™ to the digital iPod (Evans, 2001).

Figure 3. Saussurian Signification



(Evans, 2001, p. 183)

As evidenced in the above diagram (refer to Figure 3) for Saussure the signified took precedence over the signifier. Lacan, however, reverses this relation, focusing his attention upon the signifier, which, according to him, is that item that produces the signified (Evans, 2001). The signifier for Lacan can be defined as "that which represents the subject for another signifier" (as cited in Evans, 2001, p. 187). Consider the following example of a car: a car which can be defined as a motor vehicle with four rubber tires, a motor, a steering apparatus, seats, doors and bumpers. Obviously this list does not come close to exhausting all of the potential descriptors of the word "car", and taken alone none of these words is sufficient to describe what a car is. This means that there is no intrinsic connection between words like tire and car as, for example, tires can become part of children's play grounds, areas which have little to do with cars. One might even change the words altogether saying dreamily in reference to one's first car that "a car is freedom".

This example provides the chance to get at some very integral notions surrounding the signifier. Most importantly the signifier, in this case the car, is empty as it has no innate meaning, and is constituted only in reference to other signifiers, that is you could not describe a car without using words like the ones outlined above. Furthermore, this stream of words that have come to be associated with the original term make up what is called the signifying chain, or an endless stream of seemingly unrelated signifiers which are metonymic[25] or endless (Evans, 2001). At last, despite the examples given here, the signifier can be smaller or much larger than a single word, encompassing complex sentences or even ideological treatises, like symbolic orders. As a result of the endless nature of signifiers, "once the symbolic order has arisen, it creates a sense that it has always been there, since 'we find it absolutely impossible to speculate on what preceded it other than … symbols'" (S2, 5 as quoted in Evans, 2001, 202) making it into a vortex of metonyms. Consequently, it becomes very difficult to define in any satisfactory fashion the symbolic order as it will always depend upon references to an infinite number of signifiers. Similarly to the example of the car, if one were to ask what is the symbolic order of the university any definition provided would inevitably demand the use of an endless number of signifiers that make the application of a singular definition impossible.

Unfortunately, the transition from imaginary to symbolic for the child is not complete; there is a lack between these orders which can be identified as the moment of "Che Vuoi?". Zizek describes this moment in terms of a question by the subject towards the Other "You're telling me that, but what do you want with it, what are you aiming at?" (Zizek, 1989, p.

[25] Metonymy – "the diachronic relation between one signifier and another in the signifying chain" (Evans, 2001, p. 113)

111)[26] and it is in this space between utterance and enunciation or words and the manner in which they are spoken that desire is located. In Lacanian terms desire can be understood as "neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second" (as cited in Evans, 2001, p. 37), that is, the subject's relation to Lack.[27] As mentioned above the subject can not gain satisfaction from the Other, but desires both recognition from and to be the object of the Others desire, to desire from the place of the Other, to desire the Other itself and always desires something else (Evans, 2001), meaning that even if one desire is satisfied another will spring up in its place.

This relationship is further complicated by the addition of fantasy, denoted by Freud as being "a scene which is presented to the imagination and which stages an unconscious desire" (Evans, 2001, p. 60). Zizek, adds to this notion by suggesting that "through fantasy ($\$ \lozenge a$) we learn 'how to desire'" (Zizek, 1989, p. 118). As such, fantasy can be understood to act as "a defense against 'Che Vuoi?', a screen concealing the gap, the abyss of the desire of the Other" (Zizek, 1989, p. 118). Necessarily, these two components work in tandem to maintain the subject within the symbolic order, with fantasy allowing one to deal with the ambiguity of the desires of the Other. The Other, which resides in the unconscious, makes demands of the individual that seem to conflict with their desires, thereby forcing the individual to create fantasies, rationalizations or defenses that allow them to maintain their sense of self.

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[26] Philosophically speaking this question can be broken down into smaller phrases asking "what me are you referring to?" and "is the me you are referring to, the me that can answer the question?"

[27] Definition: the lack of the signifier in the Other, or the impossibility of there being a final concrete term to end the signifying chain (Evans, 2001).

Relating this discussion back to the discussion of the four discourses it might said that the symbolic order functions in much the same way as a master signifier, as it attempts to maintain itself in the eyes of the subject. This means that the symbolic order seems in some ways to work against itself as on the one hand it allows subjects the illusion of choice between itself and competing orders, while on the other hand demands that subjects work themselves into that order to gain privileges that they would not otherwise be afforded. These privileges can, for example, include cultural capital like university degrees that allow students entry into high paying positions in the business world. However, the subject is always in excess (objet petit a) of the symbolic order as they carry within them aspects of many other orders that are not assimilable to the new order.

In terms of the symbolic order of the university these excesses can be things like a student's desire to take the knowledge of the professor, based on their exposure to media representations and use it in a way that contradicts the professor's intentions. As such the subject is left with a "false choice"[28] (Zizek, 1999) as they can maintain their excess, which disallows their entry into the symbolic order, or they can give them up. By giving up their excesses students are provided with the opportunity to gain access to the cultural capital within the symbolic order, but a space is left in their subjectivity that can not be filled. To complicate matters further a subject's excesses can not be totally dispatched making their complete submersion in the symbolic order impossible. In order to mask this inability

[28] This choice can be understood as a choice that is not a choice at all. Consider an example from the film *Life is Beautiful*, which is about a Jewish family from Italy during WWII. The father and son are sent to a concentration camp and the father turns their imprisonment into a game, wherein the boy is forced to hide in the barracks from camp officials, as the rest of the children had already been murdered. At one point in the film the boy grows tired of the "game" and asks to go home, but instead of telling his son of the direness of the situation he simply says how happy the rest of the "players" will be that he has decided to give up, but then proceeds to say "let's go." However, on hearing that the other "players" will be happy that he is leaving the game the boy decides to stay. In this way the boy was given a "false choice", as he could not allow himself to give satisfaction to the other players by giving in and potentially relinquishing his dominant position in the game. As such the choice to go home was in fact not a choice at all for the boy (Zizek, 1999).

subjects then create fantasies which ultimately lead to disconnections or "ignore-ances" in the subjects speech as these creations never truly fill the gap in the subject's sense of self.

There is one final component that plays a role in the creation of an individual's subjectivity, the Real. Working alongside the symbolic and the imaginary, the Real "emerges as that which is outside to language and inassimilable to symbolization. It is 'that which resists symbolization absolutely'..." (Evans, 2001, p. 159) Unfortunately, there exists no better or more concrete definition of this term as the Real can only be understood retrospectively. For instance, consider again the example provided earlier of the student who wrote about the rape in his journal (Berman, 1994). Another part of this class was that each week Berman, as the professor of the class, would select a few of the student journals to read to the class. Randomly this student's journal was chosen and needless to say the response in the following week's journals was harsh (Berman, 1994). As such it is the moment when the responding journals were read the week following in front of the class when the first student's "ignore-ances" were completely exposed, and brought to his consciousness, that the Real irrupted. The first student was likely mortified by what the other students called the undeniable rape and humiliation of the girl from his journal leaving him potentially unsure how to reconstitute his subjectivity thereafter, as a result of the fact that he had identified himself with these other men (Berman, 1994). Moments like this catch participants completely off-guard as one could never anticipate their coming. Consequently, the Real functions to tarnish the fantasies created by subjects to maintain themselves within the symbolic order.

I would now like to suggest that this creation of subjectivity does not cease upon the infant's introduction to the symbolic order of their particular society. Instead it is a process

that is continually negotiated through the course of the subject's life, as they pass through a variety of symbolic orders. Ultimately this means that subjectivity is never whole, but in a perpetual state of becoming, a notion that I believe fits nicely with the process through which students become (re)socialized upon entering university. For the remainder of this work I will be focusing on what I have dubbed the symbolic order of the university, which has been discussed throughout this section, and some of the understandings of students' speech possible when utilizing this theoretical framework. In an effort to accomplish this objective the "discourse of the university" will be used as a gateway into this discussion as it represents the first of the discourses to which I had access and the one that most closely relates to the relationship I have understood as occurring between students, professors and the university. The "discourse of the university" diagram outlined in Figure 2 will be broken down into its component parts depending upon whether or not students or professors are being discussed as a way to understand the individual player's discussion of teaching and learning and their overall relationship to the university as an institution. Additionally, by the use of the "discourse of the university" I will also be able to utilize some of the other discourses outlined by Lacan as they are structurally similar, and allow for the elucidation of some of the pitfalls outlined that I wish to explore. The following chapter on methodology outlines how the adoption of a psychoanalytic conceptualization has implications for the methodology of the study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The guiding research question of this project, in its most general form, is: How do undergraduate students, through language, render their university experience with teaching and learning meaningful? As such, it is the intention of this research to privilege the symbolic meanings constructed by students through their speech, rather than perform a linguistic or conversational analysis. In this chapter I begin with a brief statement describing the evolution of the project followed by a discussion of the methodological strategy, which is grounded in a constructionist epistemology. In particular, I argue that Lacanian psychoanalysis can be usefully employed in a constructivist – interpretive project despite the post-structuralist and deconstructionist potential that also resides in this theoretical framework. Some attention is given to a description of the interview style adopted, recruitment of research participants and interpretive work involved in reading the textual materials developed from the interviews.

The Evolution of the Research Project

By convention many, possibly most, theses contain a chapter on methodology in which the reader expects a discussion of design, the plan which directed the course of the research and decisions of the researcher. My project, in contrast, was not guided by a pre-determined plan. Rather, the project that became my thesis evolved from a long-standing interest in teaching and learning and a more recently acquired interest in psychoanalysis. The latter was gained unexpectedly through university course work and the opportunity to do a supervised project as an undergraduate student. As part of this project I interviewed three professors with whom I had taken classes and began taking nascent steps in the use of Lacanian psychoanalysis as an interpretative approach to this type of material. Upon my entry into the

masters program at the University of Alberta an extension of this research involving students' thoughts regarding teaching and learning became possible. The evolutionary nature of the research has meant that some aspects of the data collection, like the absence of follow-up interviews with students, are potentially weakened. However, this is an exploratory study in terms of asking students for their views on the subject of teaching and learning and in terms of the conceptual framework employed. This has meant that the transferability of this work was not a primary concern as the type of conclusions and generalizations possible were completely unknown.

Finally the use of Lacanian psychoanalysis, as outlined in the critical pedagogy and Lacanian literature sections of the literature review, is rarely used as an interpretative approach to interview material in sociology, and therefore some discussion of the theoretical and methodological position I have adopted for this exploration is required. In this way Lacan's theoretical perspective will become one conceptual strategy used in the interpretation of student and professorial interviews. While there may be some objection to usage of Lacan in this way the following section is devoted to outlining just one of the potentially many ways his theories can be applied to interview material.

Methodological Strategy

As outlined in the literature review sections relating to Lacanian psychoanalysis, subjectivity and meaning are created or constructed through an interactive process between the individual, other subjects and the symbolic order to which they belong. Additionally, this subjective-self is in a continual state of transition as new symbolic orders are encountered. Lacan's psychoanalysis also bears some similarities, though this is open to great debate, to other approaches such as symbolic interaction (Schwandt, 2001) and the meaning creation

advocated by Bruner (1990), because of its contention that meaning does not exist externally to the subject's creation of it. Unlike these perspectives, however, Lacan's theories have a number of fundamental structures, which have been created in an effort to bring positivistic explanation for how subjects negotiate social meaning. This is where Lacanian psychoanalysis becomes somewhat complicated as a few authors suggest that it developed out of the structuralist tradition, with its more positivistic tendencies, while others suggest that it has grown from the post-structuralist tradition. Structuralism, generally, makes the claim that "the methods of structural linguistics can be successfully generalized so as to apply to all aspects of human culture" (Crotty, 2006, 199), that is linguistic structures, like the "discourse of the university", can be used to explain actual classroom interactions between students and professors. This tradition was followed by post-structuralism.[29]

According to Crotty (2006), structuralism and post-structuralism actually share a great deal in common, including four of five characteristics discussed by Milner (1991) beginning with "anti-historicism", "commitment to the demystification of experiential reality", "theoreticism", and "anti-humanism" (as cited in Crotty, 2006, p. 199). According to Crotty (2006), the difference lies in their respective approaches to "positivism". In the structuralist tradition the application of structural linguistics to human culture can be described as scientific. This means that this perspective rests on the belief that the structures identified are real entities with inherent meanings and can be studied objectively and, subsequently, used to study other phenomenon.

Post-structuralism, however, does not prescribe to this positivistic understanding of the structures as meaningful entities that exist (Crotty, 2006). That is, while it utilizes the

[29] While some literature suggests that post-structuralism, which technically proceeded structuralism, are exclusive entities, this is not the case. In many respects they developed along side of each other and they responded and competed with developments the other made (Schrift, 2006).

structures identified in structuralism its use of them remains on a contingent level, meaning that any interpretation is open to further scrutiny. Based upon this understanding and the constructivist assumptions I have made the structures posited by Lacan become a lens through which the students' interviews and the meanings they have created are envisioned. In this way the assumptions made by the Lacanian structures, such as the notion that students' spoken language hides another meaning, act as places from which different questions can be asked of the material.

There has been some debate, however, surrounding whether or not Lacan can be truly placed within the structuralist or post-structuralist epistemological tradition. Authors such as Lechte (1994) have written that Lacan was in fact a structuralist because of his "emphasis on language as a system of differences without positive term", meaning that the words themselves have no inherent meaning, but can be understood only through differences established between that word and others in a structured sense (Lechte, 1994, p. 67). For instance, consider the example of the car discussed in the previous chapter, wherein the letters that composed the word "car" could not relay "car-ness". This could only be done when other seemingly unrelated words were used in association with the word car (ex. tires, doors, bumpers). Other authors such as Wicks (2003) and Schrift (2006) place Lacan in the structuralist tradition because of his decentering of the subject. While authors like Crotty (2006) place him squarely in the post-structuralist tradition, as a result of his contention that language and meaning are shifting entities. But even writers who claim that Lacan was anti or counter-structuralist state that his ultimate goal was "to replace such [old] systematic structures with structures of [his] own – structures which define new spaces of non-conformity and freedom" (Bannet, 1989, p. 5). More specifically, Lacan sought to replace the

confining structures in existence with others that enable the subject a greater level of autonomy. That is, Lacan did not want to get rid of structure, but replace one with another. Consequently, the ready use of Lacan as either a structuralist or a post-structuralist becomes difficult since it would seem that his theories exist somewhere in between these terms.

Much of this confusion seems to develop out of an apparent contradiction between Lacan's theoretical perspective and his focus on language. As discussed in detail in the literature review, language is composed of signifiers that have no definite meaning, but instead one that slips and slides away as more words/signifiers are used to make the definition "clear". At the same time he developed numerous mathematical symbols, such as S_1, S_2, a, and $\$$, which are meant to stand in for theoretical concepts like power structures, knowledge, subjects outside of power structures, and subjects trapped inside of power structures. In a structuralist sense these symbols are meant to act as the basis from which the analysis of a subject's language is to take place. This turn to mathematics and more specifically to "algebra" and "topology" (Evans, 2001, p. 108) represents a shift in Lacan's thinking about psychoanalysis as he makes his "return to Freud" (Marini, 1992, p. 40). For Lacan this meant making psychoanalysis into "a science capable of shedding light on the foundations of other sciences as well as on the human psyche" (Marini, 1992, p. 40). However, the symbols' strengths as symbols that stand outside of the problems associated with signifiers as parts of language are considerable and open to further debate. That is, the meanings of these symbols/signifiers must remain incomplete, unfixed and always open to further interpretation.

With respect to my thesis this means that Lacanian psychoanalysis and several of the structures he created will be used in a very particular manner to interpret the voices and

words of undergraduate students. This means that several assumptions must be made about the nature of the structures. To begin the structures, including the "discourse of the university" and the unconscious with its structure and role as the seat of the symbolic, imaginary and real orders, will be treated as points of reference from which alternative inquiries of the relationship between students and professors can be made. That is, it will be assumed that professors hold the knowledge sought by students and students, in turn, must be willing to give up a portion of their identity to gain access to the knowledge and the associated cultural capital of the symbolic order. However, any interpretations made using structures such as the "discourse of the university" will be countered with several other interpretations reexamining the student interviews from a variety of angles. In this way psychoanalysis will not become the sole way of thinking about the student interviews and the reflexivity of the post-structural tradition will be integrated. Through this process it is intended that the aspects of the student's speech surrounding teaching, learning, knowledge and power that could not be accounted for in other interpretations be brought to light and further scrutinized. These unexplored factors have been recognized based on the treatment of both the student and professorial interviews as texts, which require a close reading, like the one advocated by Aoki (2001), wherein the reader is an active participant in the search for meaning within the text itself.

To accomplish this particular task an important presumption about the nature of my "texts" needs to be stated. Like the understanding of signifiers outlined earlier the words of students and professors in and of themselves have no meaning, but can only be understood in relation to other words. As such the interpretive process is back-and-forth or what has been described as the progressive-regressive (Crotty, 2003), which ultimately leads to a further

refinement or reframing of the questions to be asked of the research material. That is, not a single lens can be used to examine the interview material, because each of them makes several assumptions about the importance of some words, phrases and meanings over others. Consequently, there can be no assumption that using Lacanian psychoanalysis, for example, is capable of obtaining the complete meaning of a word, line of text or interview.

Primary Source of Research Material

Interview Style:

The format of the research question outlined in the introduction requires that students discuss teaching and learning in their own words, because of its focus on the subjects individual understanding and experience with these sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1969). Furthermore, the practice of psychoanalysis, which was founded on Freud's discovery of the unconscious[30], where the symbolic and imaginary orders are seated, is grounded in the use of language. According to Lacan the unconscious is only accessible through language and more specifically when the subject is speaking (Evans, 2001). Therefore, the interviews were conducted in a conversational style "in which knowledge is constructed through the interaction of interviewer and interviewee" (Kvale, 1996, p. 36). However, it must be noted that it is virtually impossible for the researcher to have a completely correct understanding of the subject's language, as a result of the fluidity of any signifier. Consequently, this epistemological approach makes the analysis of the interview material an interpretation rather than a report on the "real" lived experiences of the professors and students.

[30] The actual existence of the unconscious as with many of Freud's and subsequently Lacan's theories has not be empirically proven (Ekstrom, 2004, Fischer and Pipp, (1984), Beebe, (1997), however, for the purposes of this work the use of these terms is not equated to tangible entities. Instead their theoretical definitions will be used to examine the language of students and professors.

The particular strategy I adopted for conducting the student interviews relates closely to that adopted by Hollway and Jefferson (1997) in their study on fear of crime, wherein they looked to the "biographical interpretive method" developed by a group of sociologists interviewing Holocaust survivors. This strategy embodies four principles: "use open-ended not closed questions, elicit stories, avoid "why" questions and follow up using respondents ordering/phrasing" (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997, p. 6). With respect to my own interview guide (see Appendix 1), which developed from questions I had as an undergraduate student, in addition to topics (including the issue of harm) that arose during the professors[31] interviews I generally began with the question of what good teaching meant to the student. The remaining questions, however, were often not approached in the order presented if at all. The reason for this divergence being that often students would cover the questions as part of the story they were relating about their experience. As such it became inappropriate to follow the interview guide strictly and instead I would follow up student comments with probes, using the student's language, designed to elicit greater detail about particular events the student described. It must also be noted that the presence of sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1969), including good teaching, learning, knowledge power and harm, which developed from my own experiences as a student might present some problems to the analysis of the students' responses since it may have caused a bias in the students for a particular answer. But, as a result of the fluidity of signifiers like "good teaching", what becomes important to

[31] The questions posed to the professors developed from my experience as an undergraduate student at the University of Alberta and through conversations with the supervisor from my undergraduate project. The first seven questions in the interview guide were prepared prior to the first interview with the professors, and augmented with questions that arose throughout the course of our conversation. The last twenty-two questions, listed in appendix two, were used in the follow-up interview. These questions were generated from my initial analysis of the first interviews and these were specific to particular professors, that is, not all of the twenty-two questions were posed to each professor.

capture from the students' responses is how they relate to this term and how their own words relate subsequent terms, not necessarily the term itself.

These understandings were also integrated with another of Hollway and Jefferson's (1997) interpretive methods "that does not take respondents' account at face value, [but] probes using absences and avoidances in the narrative as much as what is said, to identify areas of significance" (p. 2). As such the researcher is recognized as being involved in a dialogue, an active participant in the process of meaningful communication, with the participant seeking to uncover an alternative understanding. However, the work of Hollway and Jefferson (1997) was not located until after the interviews of both the students and professors had been completed. As such the probing for absences advocated by Hollway and Jefferson could not occur during the interview process; instead following the interviews and transcription process a written text that attempted to remain true to the words of the student was created. It was from these texts that a critically oriented third reading using psychoanalytically informed principles could be undertaken and it is only at this moment that it became possible to investigate absences or disconnections in students' speech.

Hindsight is a great teacher. Had I discovered Hollway and Jefferson's (1997) methodological text, using a psychoanalytic approach to the study of fear of crime, it may have been possible to interview each undergraduate student, analyze the content of the interview and prepare a follow-up interview in an attempt to gain more depth and nuance with respect to the meaning of the original responses given. I believe this would have resulted in a richer data set and quite likely stronger evidence for the interpretive work performed. However, time restraints made this second step impossible as this sample of students was conveniently drawn from the classes of the three professors as the winter 2005

semester drew to a close. Despite this obvious drawback the insights obtained have exploratory value and I feel meaningful interpretations can still be made. These preliminary insights might enable future research on the topic and ultimately lead to policy suggestions not possible with the current study.

Recruitment:

Three professors who teach in the area of social science were selected for the first undergraduate project completed in 2003 as an independent study. Each of the three professors was chosen on the basis of how I, as an undergraduate student, felt their classes had contributed to my understanding of university education. While it might seem that these classes hold a special place in my memory similar experiences could have been drawn from many of the classes I had taken as an undergraduate student. The chosen classes were diverse in subject matter and had intriguing presentations. This diversity was important as I wanted to ensure that I was getting a broadness of perspectives on how professors understood their role within the context of the university and the university classroom. Once ethics approval had been obtained, I approached each of the professors to seek their participation. They all agreed to participate and a date and time for two consecutive interviews was scheduled.

Students were recruited on the basis of my desire to make connections between the interviews of the professors and the students and because of the relationship I had already established with these professors[32]. As a first step in this direction, after I had received ethics approval, I approached the three professors who were originally interviewed to seek permission to ask for their students' participation in my thesis project. This step was important for three reasons. First, since students were being drawn from classes I had some familiarity with I was able to focus my attention on what the students' said, instead of getting

[32] Convenience Sampling (Trochim, 2001).

caught up in how that particular class was structured. Second, using the classes of professors from the first project also enabled the use of some of my own experiences from these classes as a basis for certain analyses. Third, recruiting students from the three professors' classes made incorporation of the professors' previous interviews relevant as a way to highlight some of the differences between the talk of students and teachers with respect to teaching and learning. However, none of the interview questions were designed to ask students directly about the class from which they were recruited. The goal of this research was not to find out more about those particular classes, but to allow students to use their own words to describe their understanding of the teaching and learning to which they had been exposed.

On the day that I was to enter each of the classes, due to ethics concerns, none of the professors were in the room, helping to ensure that students' felt no coercion to participate. Table 1 (see below) categorizes the twelve student participants according to gender, year of undergraduate study and the faculty in which they were enrolled.[33] The gender split between male and female respondents is fairly representative of the general make-up of Faculty of Arts and more specifically the social sciences classes within the University of Alberta. I was also able to obtain a relatively even number of students from the Faculty of Arts and non-Arts faculties. As for the year of study, admittedly there are a greater proportion of students in their first or second years of university. One large contributing factor to this difference might have been that students were recruited just a week or two before final exams began, meaning that due to the pressure of exams and term papers some senior level students might have been too busy or preoccupied to volunteer for an interview.

[33] Due to a promise of confidentiality and anonymity the specific classes from which the twelve students came will not be disclosed as it would provide enough information to identify the professors and possibly the student volunteers.

Table 1: Student Participants by Gender, Year of University and Faculty

	Gender	**Year of University**	**Faculty**
	Male: 4	1st year: 5	Arts: 6
	Female: 8	2nd year: 3	Science: 5
		3rd year: 2	Engineering : 1
		4th year: 1	
		5th year: 1	
Totals:	12	12	12

Additionally, two of the classes' students were recruited from were lower level classes meaning that there were likely a higher number of junior level students enrolled in them. Finally, in at least one of the classes, from which students were recruited, students began leaving the class before the form upon which they could indicate their willingness to participate reached them. Despite these drawbacks this project was not meant to be a representative sample of university students, like the report of Krahn et al. (1995). Instead it is intended to explore alternative understandings of teaching and learning.

The Researcher's Judgment:

The twelve interviews conducted with students lasted between twenty-five to forty minutes each and took place in either an empty conference room or my office in the Henry Marshall Tory building. There were no other people present during the interviews. Each of the students was highly engaged in the conversation, as I could see that they were making every effort to answer all of the questions posed. None of the students seemed to be rushed for time and many stayed after the formal interview was completed to discuss the project or

other class experiences. The post interview comments were also recorded in field notes written after the student departed. However, several students stood out from the group of twelve as they were either more articulate or presented a unique view in comparison to the others.

Interpretative Work/Analysis

All of the undergraduate student interviews were tape recorded and fully transcribed. The professorial interviews were not tape recorded, but extensive hand written notes were made during the interview, followed by an individual writing session that took place shortly after each interview, when gaps in the notes were filled. As a result of the fact that I was able to conduct two interviews with the professors, time was taken to process the information and prepare follow up questions for issues like harm in the classroom. Since I found that follow-up interview very enlightening, I regret that it was not possible to conduct two interviews with the students. However, this lack can not be counteracted after-the-fact. In total, the textual material for interpretation represents twelve undergraduate student interviews and six professorial interviews.

The interpretive process for examining the topic of teaching and learning, begun with transcription, was extended in earnest by reading and re-reading the transcripts of the interview with each undergraduate student. To enhance my own concentration I read the transcript of each student interview while listening to the taped interview. This reading practice helped to avoid the tendency to skim the written text in a superficial manner. By reading at the speed of the actual interview conversation, I was able to hear hesitations, pauses, changes in emotional tone and recall some of the gestures students made as they spoke, each of which contributed to the detail included in the narratives created.

Mindful that it is through story-telling that human beings make experience intelligible (Plummer, 2001: 157), I paid close attention to the story, the way the story was told in terms of actions taken, of how actions linked to other events, describing relationships between self and others, providing context and using examples to illustrate points. Sensitized to the notion of story, I attempted to grasp the coherence, or pattern of the overall story or stories within a story of the students' interview. I was particularly focused on the metaphors or idiosyncratic phrases that were used more than once and on the threads of the story that were woven through various smaller stories. In this way, repetition and thematic variation were read as signs of a pattern of meaning especially as these pertain to teaching and learning. The re-told stories of four students are written and presented in Chapter 4. The four students were selected for the richness of the detail offered in the original telling and this of course, correlated with the length of the interview as well as the student's ability to articulate their point of view.

Having written the stories into narrative form, I performed a second reading and re-reading of the teaching and learning thematic. Although the students did not use the theoretical language of, for example, the critical pedagogy literature, I tried to draw out what students had to say in relation to concepts found in that literature. In particular, I attempted to lift into view what the four students' narratives said, in general, about the relation between student and professor, the position of the student to power and authority and the nature of knowledge.

A third reading and re-reading of the four student narratives was also completed. In this reading I was mindful, following the approach of Holloway and Jefferson's (1997) that the unintentional, hidden or suppressed meanings may be made more visible if the researcher

pays attention to the inconsistencies and contradictions in the storied telling. Returning to the disappointments and inconsistencies and using concepts drawn from a Lacanian framework, in particular those comprising the "discourse of the university", I offer the third, albeit partial, re-examination of the student narratives.

The topic of harm in the context of teaching and learning followed the same practice of close reading and re-reading, but in this instance I draw more heavily on my position as student. That is, for the interpretative reconstruction on harm, I take advantage of having been an undergraduate student in courses taught by the three social science professors that I interviewed. Thus my reading of harm began with a close reading and re-reading of the interview notes taken during and immediately after interviewing the professors. Every effort was made to grasp what each professor communicated about harm, its nature and place within the context of teaching and learning. I constructed a re-telling of the three versions for presentation in Chapter 5. Then, using my own memories as an undergraduate student in the classroom of each of the professors, and drawing on remembered examples of harm, I attempted to weave the autobiographical with the interview material as a contextualizing device for the purpose of making harm appear less abstract and more concrete. I also use the theoretical concepts from the Lacanian framework to lend a critical edge to the exploration. Finally, I position comments from a selection of the undergraduate students I interviewed as they struggled to make sense of how harm might arise in the context of their own teaching and learning.

Finally, while every effort has been made to separate my self as the researcher from my self as an undergraduate and then graduate student, there will inevitably be overlap between these subject positions. Therefore, the use of reflexivity will be made as a "critical self

reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions [and] preferences..." (Schwandt, 2001, p.224); meaning that throughout the text I as author, researcher and student will attempt to be as forthcoming as possible in laying bare my subjectivity in the process of interpretation and writing. However, the preceding statement is not intended to let me as the researcher and author "off the hook" with respect to the assumptions I have made to conduct this research, but to demonstrate the complex nature of all social interactions. I have made every effort to avoid the situation in which Borland (2004) found herself after interviewing and interpreting the story related by her grandmother. As she neared the completion of a final draft of this work Borland decided to share it with her grandmother who said pointedly that it was no longer her story, but her granddaughter's, as she had interpreted things from the story that the grandmother had never before considered. Borland's grandmother's words became unrecognizable to her. Of course I have no way of knowing if the students to whom I spoke would echo Borland's grandmother if they were to look back at what I have done with their stories. However, to combat this I have attempted to make a solid distinction between when I as a researcher am interpreting students' voices and when the students are speaking for themselves.

Chapter 4

Teaching and Learning

Originally it was my idea that teaching and learning were separate and different entities and as I such envisioned two chapters, one on teaching and another on learning. However, it was difficult to identify the comments of students as referring solely to teaching or learning. Students discussed teaching and learning as inseparable, as the teaching they were receiving was of the utmost importance to the learning they were able to accomplish. In this way learning and teaching have importance and significance in reference to each other. Consequently, teaching and learning though analytically separable are, in experiential terms, indivisible.

As mentioned previously for this chapter the interviews of only four of the twelve students will be presented in depth. There were several factors involved in the decision to use the interviews of these students in particular. Practically speaking these students' interviews were generally longer than the other eight providing more and richer material for interpretation. On the more analytic side these students were more articulate, as they seemed to have already thought about the kinds of questions being posed to them during the interview. Also, in examining the four interviews, each taken as a whole, it appeared that there were four identifiable patterns of teaching/learning. Therefore, after a careful re-examination of each of the other eight students' interviews it became clear that the ideas and characterizations expressed by the four students were reflected in the comments of the other students making the addition of a fifth or sixth student redundant. Consequently, it is within, and only within, the context of the twelve interviews conducted for this thesis that the four

students (S2, S4, S8 and S7) chosen act as "ideal" patterns, which in bits and pieces are represented in the dialogue of the other eight students.

In this chapter student notions of teaching and learning will be analyzed and interpreted to provide an overall understanding of the whole and parts of each of the four students' interviews. This has meant that each of the students' interviews have been subjected to several levels of interpretation. The first provides in narrative form the story of teaching and learning as told to the researcher during the interview. The narrative for each of the four students was developed through successive readings in which the student's perspective on teaching and learning emerged by relating parts of the interview and answers to specific questions, and to the story as a whole. This interpretive work resulted in a reconstruction, a narrative produced by the researcher, using the words, ideas, examples and situations as told by the students. In this sense, I retell the four stories staying as close to the original dialogue as possible. The second level occurs after each narrative providing a summary to explain the descriptive label given to each of the four patterns: inspirational/experiential, master/apprentice, humanist/contemplative, and credentialing/consumerist. In the summaries I briefly show how each pattern illustrates a particular style of teaching and learning demonstrating the nature of the student-professor relationship and its relation to power and knowledge. These are theoretical concepts consistent with Lacan's psychoanalytic assumptions and his conception of the discourse of the university. Finally, I return to the four student narratives as a set and using a Lacanian lens, I inquire of additional interpretations that may be made of the narratives paying particular attention to facets of speech left unresolved in the interview. These include concepts such as the unconscious, symbolic carry-overs (or excess) from outside the university, desire and fantasy.

Student Narratives and Interpretations

Student 2:

Student two (S2) was in his first year at the University of Alberta, and his third year of post-secondary education in Alberta. The first two years of his Arts degree were spent at a local college. He was a mature student who had completed at least one other degree, plus post-secondary professional training in the United Kingdom (U.K.) during the 1960s to '80s. He had chosen his current path of study because to him the topic of sociology seemed "relevant to life". He was recruited to this study from a large class (+200) and at the time of the interview, he had, as he put it, yet to reach his "groove" at the University of Alberta.[34] He went on to say that the transition to the University of Alberta "[hadn't] been a positive one for [him]" and that he has not "enjoyed" his time thus far.

He characterized "good teaching" in reference to, "a catch phrase that [he] read on a notice [board] one day: "lighting fires, not filling buckets". And that [seemed] to sum it up for [him]. Stimulate [him] to go off and look at something [himself] because it sounds interesting." Going on to explain his understanding of "lighting fires, not filling buckets", he said "… [it's] making [him] want to go out and look at these things, to question the things that you are seeing on a day to day basis. Why is X like X? Is that appropriate? Is that the only way it can be?" He continued, "And, I haven't for the most part found that." That is more than seeking out knowledge that might "fill" his bucket; it seems that S2 is interested in discovering a different way of thinking about "everyday knowledge". However, rather than engaging in this type of thinking about "everyday knowledge" S2 goes to lectures and has his bucket filled. Interestingly, he is quick to note in the interview that this is not the fault of

[34] The "groove" to which S2 is referring should not be read as an admission that he enjoyed the time spent at the local college, as within the interview he never explicitly states that he enjoyed that time. Only that he "got into the groove there".

professors because as he put it, "[they've] got an administrative/bureaucratic framework to work in. They have got to cover so many chapters, pages, whatever it is." In so doing S2 transitions the responsibility for his not receiving "good teaching", as he understands it, from the actual person (the professor), with whom he has contact on a daily basis, to an entity (the bureaucratic structure of the university) with which he has no direct physical contact.

The critical nature of S2's metaphor of "lighting fires, not filling buckets", relates very closely to a perspective, of critical pedagogy provided by David Lusted (1988) wherein he suggests that it enables students to ask the "how" questions related to the transmission, reproduction and most importantly production of knowledge. It enables subjects to ask under what conditions "we come to know" (Lusted, 1988, p. 3). S2 wants to have the opportunity to question everyday knowledge, since to him good teaching means that one is questioning things like, "Why is X like X? Is that appropriate?" However, the questioning greatly complicates S2's potential relationship to knowledge as it could no longer be taken for granted that X is X, and begs the question of how that knowledge came into existence.

When discussing the role of the professor S2 stated, "...that [the professor should] contribute to lighting fires. [But] what it <u>is</u> is imparting information and that's the issue." Or thought of in another way S2 is stating that presently students' buckets are being merely "filled" with information. Recalling his previous background in the U.K. S2 was asked whether or not this observation was one that was unique to his Canadian education, to which he replied "yes", continuing from a previous thought that professors have certain parameters in which they must function to teach within the university. He then went on to relate the following experience from his U.K. education, as a way to contrast the difference between North American and British systems of education. In the 1980s S2 was taking a social

psychology class and one day a fellow student was suffering from a headache. Wanting to help, one of the other students in the class offered her a Tylenol, but the student had to decline saying that she couldn't take Tylenol. Upon hearing this, the professor of the class began asking the student three questions repetitively; what was the "location, shape and color of the headache." During the exercise the student focused on the headache and a short time later it had disappeared. Now S2 could not remember the "exact theory" behind this exercise, but said that it "challenged [his] assumption that pharmaceuticals are the answer", as his nursing background had trained him to accept. S2 then went on to say that he tried this same exercise with several other people and found that it only worked on those who were not rigidly set in a single way of thinking.

This particular recollection was important to this student because it represented a time when his "fire was lit". Previous to that moment in class, when the professor demonstrated that headaches could be cured by non-traditional means, S2, as per his nurses training, had assumed that pharmaceuticals were the only answer. For S2 this moment addressed the question "Is that the only way it can be?" as he discovered that perhaps his former thoughts surrounding the topic were not correct or were at least partial. Then intrigued by the experience he went on to perform his own tests and discovered that the technique used by the professor, from the social psychology class, could not be used successfully on all people. As such another layer was added to this student's comprehension of pain management, as it was only those people who were not rigidly set in a single way of thinking, perhaps like a nurse, that responded to this strategy. Importantly to S2 this was one instance in which there was no attempt only to "fill" him with information. He witnessed a set of events and was then free to

follow his curiosity and glean new knowledge through practice without the original imposition of those knowledge usages.

Based on this experience, S2 distinguishes between the notions of "knowledge" and "information". As per his metaphor "knowledge" fits with "lighting fires", as it can only be gained via direct or first-hand evidence, like the one outlined above. S2 experienced the professor ridding the student of the headache and then went on to gather "experimental" evidence by attempting the professor's technique on the people around him. "Information", however, can be likened to the "filling buckets" portion of S2's metaphor, as it seems to deal solely with details which are devoid of the inspiration needed for S2 to take the next important step towards gaining the experience that leads to his knowledge. Although S2 did not mention particularly that "information" was of little value to him, it is clear from the fervor with which he spoke about his "knowledge" that it was more highly valued in his learning.

With the foundation of S2's understanding of "good teaching" and the role of the professor as "lighting fires" in place, the turn towards the examination of how S2 understands the university classroom makes the identification of potential disconnections much easier. With respect to the topic of teaching style S2 stated that he preferred "interactive [classes] without a doubt" with some excitement in his voice at what could be the prospect of having his "fire" lit. He then went on to say matter-of-factly, with that initial enthusiasm lost "[But] you got to look at class sizes. 160-200 people [makes it] very, very difficult to be interactive." In this last statement there was a marked difference in his tone compared to his earlier discussion regarding "lighting fires". Instead of carrying with it a sense of animation at the thought of what "lighting fires" might mean to his learning, it changed to one where he

rushed to nonchalantly state the banal "reality" of the size of his classes. This is not to suggest that class size does not impact on the ability for interaction and discussion to occur in the classroom, it does point to an interesting disconnection between this and an earlier comment made by S2 regarding the role of the professor.

When discussing his metaphor and the potential it has for his learning/knowledge acquisition there is a tangible excitement in S2's voice, as he considers the opportunities it holds for his adventure in learning. However, when discussing the "realities" of the university classroom there is a sense of resignation in his voice, as he potentially recognizes the impossibility of attaining his desires in the current structure. That is, through his experience with North American education S2 has come to understand that there is no room for attaining his ideal of "good teaching" or "good learning" within present university classrooms, subsequently, forcing him to get into a different kind of "groove" one that he has not yet found. This suggests that while he holds out hope that his desires will be met, he simultaneously accepts that this is unlikely to happen.

Delving further into the university classroom the role of the textbook was also discussed. When he was asked what he found more valuable the teacher or the textbook S2 stated, "that isn't an either/or cause it depends on the instructor doesn't it?" He went on to say that "if the instructor is valid and good, then the instructor [is more valuable than the textbook] without a doubt", but he then provided an example of what happens when the professor is not "valid or good". In one class he had taken at the University of Alberta the professor stated "70% of the multiple choice questions" will be taken directly from the course review manual meaning that students had immediate access to approximately three quarters of the potential test questions and answers. Consequently, the vast majority of

students simply stopped coming to class as they realized little new information needed for the testing process could be gained through attendance. Overall this entire experience was incredibly disheartening to S2, who not only disliked the lack of motivating effect demonstrated by the professor, but also that other students were no longer attending the class. This meant, ultimately, any interaction or class discussion that could occur was devoid of the energy that results from the diversity possible from a plethora of viewpoints.

Based on this initial response S2 was then asked what he felt should be more important. He replied, "It should be the teacher. The teacher should engage every student in the room, it's an impossible task…[but they] should say something in the course of every week that makes a student want to think "I wonder whether they are right or not; I am going to go look at that"". Again the tension, expressed by S2, between his desire for inspired learning and the reality of inspired learning as "an impossible task", come to the forefront. Throughout the entirety of S2's response he maintains the contention that professors "should" be inspiring students to "go look at that", but his simultaneous recognition that "it's an impossible task" brings everything else into question. If "engaging" students is impossible, as S2 seems to suggest, then how can he maintain his desire for inspiration to seek experimental knowledge?

Like many of the other students, S2 was quick to say "no" when asked if he needed to feel entertained in a class, continuing on to say that a class was useful to him when "[he] leaves the class and [thinks] about the content and it stays with [him]." Interestingly in this response S2 no longer seems singularly interested in experience as a means to gain knowledge, but also in having the material stay with him. He went on to say that it was important to him to be able to tell friends "oh such and such and that's what was said in this class". However, perhaps this is an indication that S2 has been inspired by the material, since

having it "stay with [him]", would mean that he could recollect it for further experiment in the future.

The following discussion stemmed from an experience I had as an undergraduate student, wherein, I altered my thinking about a particular subject to come in line with the professor's thinking and obtain a good grade on a paper. I asked students whether or not they felt the need to do something similar. S2 stated that he had and proceeded to relate an experience he had with an English professor wherein he wrote what he called "a position paper", with the understanding that the position he was taking on the topic was opposite to that of the professor. Until that point in time, he explained, his paper grades had been sitting around 85%, and wanting to maintain that average, he said he worked hard to draw on many sources and references to bolster the position he was taking. In his opinion the act of conducting the research in defending his position was what university was intended to teach. Shortly after submission the paper was returned with a 72% and the comment "well written, but wrong position". Unlike my experience, wherein the professor, during a meeting, had stopped me from writing a paper that would have been contrary to his understanding of the material, S2 had known the entire time he was writing the paper that it was contrary. However, by failing to take the position of the professor as "truth" he failed to learn appropriately and was punished accordingly. His average grade dropped thirteen percent from 85% to 72%. S2 was greatly dismayed by this situation as he specifically mentioned that he worked hard to gather research to support the argument made in his paper. Working and thinking independently is, according to S2, "what [university's] about."

Of course many different conclusions can be drawn from this story. One not offered by S2 is that he simply wrote a poorer paper. However, what is most intriguing about this entire

recollection is the final statement, "well written, but wrong position", which suggests that this alternative may not be accurate. While no evidence could be obtained to substantiate the veracity of this statement, more important for S2 are the implications this particular recollection has for him. Given that students are often told they should seize the opportunity to formulate a carefully considered rebuttal to the professor's presentation, as part of experimenting with critical thinking, would S2 consciously make this choice again? Would S2 have the courage to contradict another professor, understanding that he could be punished for a "well written" paper?

A potential outlet for S2's frustrations with his university experience is teaching or course evaluations. But for S2 course or teaching evaluations were simply a "waste of time." When asked, "Do you think that there is any way these devices could be useful?" S2 replied, "Not if the professor isn't willing to hear what is being said." Elaborating further that few students would have the ability to go "face-to-face" with a professor and say "I really don't think that you are doing me any favors teaching in this style." The reason S2 gave for this inability on the part of students was fear of retribution suggesting professors, who are "only human" would take "honest" feedback personally and award poor grades to get back at students. As such it would seem that S2 feels powerless to provide any comments to the professor regarding the teaching he is being provided in his classes. The fear of potentially lower grades is not worth the risk for S2, or it might be argued, for any student. Interestingly S2's response was that he seems to have overlooked, or disregarded for the moment, the anonymous nature of course evaluations, further suggesting that his fear of retribution is greater than his desire for giving candid feedback.

Finally when discussing the focus of the university as an institution S2 related another experience he had in his university classes. He begins: "...I think Professor A[35] summed it up in class there, so as to shatter any illusions that we may have, [Professor A said], "Teaching is of no importance to my job". It's how many papers he's published, how many grants he's applied for, how much money he's brought into the school..." At the time of the interview this revelation by S2 was made as if Professor A had simply confirmed an idea that S2 already held about the status of teaching within the University of Alberta. He did not seem surprised that undergraduate student teaching was not the main occupation of professors. However, examining more closely his language this apparent matter-of-fact response must be reconsidered. Although he begins by saying that the state of undergraduate education was "summed up" by Professor A, he goes onto say that the professor told the students about his understanding of teaching to "shatter any illusions" they might have implying that S2 along with other students had a misunderstanding of university teaching. This suggests a further struggle within this student between his notions of "good teaching" and the new understanding he is beginning to obtain from his most recent education. That is, it might be argued, to function within the University of Alberta S2's previous understandings with respect to good teaching and learning must be "shattered". Furthermore, the presumption that S2 understood Professor A's revelation does not fit with the detailed experience he revealed from his education in the U.K. about the fellow student with the headache. Could S2 have had this experience from a professor who was not engaged in their teaching? Or would S2 be as disappointed in his grade from the English class, had he understood that teaching was of little importance to the professor? And more importantly would he have even taken the

[35] The names of professors other than X, Y, and Z have also been changed using letters from the front of the alphabet to preserve consistency and anonymity.

chance to write a contrary paper? The answer to each of these questions seems to be no, making the real question then how does S2 manage to juggle these conflicting desires and realities.

Inspirational/Experimental Pattern:

By way of summarizing S2's interview narrative the following is a further interpretation of the interview itself which is meant to represent a particular pattern that emerged from his speech, which I have labeled "inspirational/experimental". This label developed directly from S2's repeated usage of the metaphor "lighting fires, not filling buckets", as throughout the interview he continually returned to the idea that a teacher should inspire students. That is, in this pattern the student seems to be seeking a teacher who has the craft to inspire students to gain knowledge/experience on their own. To be a student in this pattern is to be an active participant employing cognitive processes and all of the bodily senses. As such knowledge is a process and involves professor and teacher in participatory relationship since the student seems to "test" hypotheses proposed by the teacher's presentation of class material. In this respect, the ideal student is actively involved in a process of testing, confirming, refuting, extending, to see if in varying contexts the hypotheses stand up to scrutiny. Therefore, learning for this kind of student has much less to do with passively absorbing and committing facts to memory and more to do with the process through which concepts and facts are tested, confirmed and reflected in the way that S2 learned that the non-pharmaceutical headache remedy only worked on a particular kind of person.

As participants in the production of knowledge, knowledge in contrast to mere information may be understood to have a personal dimension. It needs to be processed,

perhaps synthesized with prior experience, making it uniquely one's own. In this way S2's grasp of teaching and learning relates very closely with the definition of critical pedagogy provided in the literature review, since through his experiments he would be able to witness the production of knowledge and possibly create knowledge. Moreover, this process would also provide S2 with the opportunity to create absolute difference, as he is taking the information provided to him by the professor and turning it into his own knowledge, that is, a set of knowledge inherently different from the professor's. Therefore, power, in this pattern, ideally lies in the ability of the teacher to inspire, as well as with students who choose to be inspired, or not, by the professor's presentation. Yet, in this pattern there exists an interesting tension, and possibly an impediment to the relationship. The concrete professor-student relationship is not entirely or necessarily benign. If the knowledge created by the student does not reaffirm the knowledge of the professor, the professor has power which may be exercised especially in the evaluation of assignments. Here, the teacher is perceived to have the ultimate power to punish wrong thinking; to use grades to instill conformity.

Student 4:

Student four (S4), in his fifth year of post-secondary education, was planning post-baccalaureate studies in Education or Law after the completion of his BSc. Like S2 he studied at a smaller local college in Alberta before making the transfer to the University of Alberta. He was completing his first degree. S4 was also recruited from a class of over 200 students. For S4 "good teaching" was displayed by a professor's "preparedness and enthusiasm" and his sense that they accept teaching as a significant role in their professional career. S4 was able to gain evidence for this definition of "good teaching" when he could see that professors were:

> ...just more [interested] in the actual topic that [they're] talking about, like that you [the student perceives] anyway. As opposed to just running through just what [they're] supposed to talk about, like the content, that he or she would add more information or give examples...

"Good teaching" for S4, therefore, applies to the perception of a certain level of commitment from the professor to the teaching in which they are engaged. This was exemplified by the number and perhaps the quality of further examples provided in addition to the general content the professor is "supposed to talk about." Unfortunately, S4 was not asked for a specific example of a professor going beyond the minimum material, but perhaps an assumption can be made using his responses to other questions. Perhaps for S4 this was a professor who tied the course content to the "real world" or to the professor's own research and gave students "more practical applications" of seemingly abstract theoretical knowledge.

With respect to teaching style S4 said that he enjoys a combination of discussion and lecture because, "it depends on...the subject matter...[as he finds] that for most classes...there [are] specific topics that are best presented verbatim and there [are] other ones that are best presented like more Socratic...with discussions and interactions type of thing." While this differentiation between types of presentation styles might relate to S4's enrolment in the Faculty of Science where proportionately less discussion occurs he was also registered in more discursive subjects such as English, his minor subject of concentration. Consequently, S4's distinction between the types of material appropriate for lecture and for discussion could develop from exposure to different disciplinary contexts. Evidence for this assertion can be found at the beginning of the above statement when S4 says that "it

depends", suggesting that he recognizes that particular subjects are best relayed to students using different teaching methods.

S4 was also asked whether or not there were any drawbacks to straight lecturing. Contrasting lectures and discussion classes he replied discussion classes seem to have, "more personal contact…with the professor." This more spontaneous atmosphere S4 suggested improved the quality of, and student concern with, course work in those classes. This was because S4 felt implicitly the professor had, in these classes, an awareness of things like attendance, participation and which students were having problems with class material. Subsequently, these observations by S4 may be linked to his earlier comments regarding the need for professors to be "prepared" to teach the class. That is for S4 preparation may not only relate to the need to have particular material prepared for the class but also less tangible concerns like difficulty of the material and accurate projections of student uptake of that material.

Contrary to this vision of the professor as a watchful eye over student learning, when discussing the role of the professor within the university S4 said, "I wouldn't say its teaching, not primarily." Instead, he went on to suggest, "It's more like a regulation of what passes for good knowledge and research." He then described the professor as the person in whom the "standard" of knowledge resides, meaning, "[professors] have a responsibility to provide accurate and kind of unbiased information so that whatever they say, whatever they research, whatever their findings are, [they are] not used inappropriately." In this instance the less than stable nature of S4's vision of good teaching as a dual relationship between preparedness and enthusiasm, and academic information comes to light. In the above statement S4 places considerable emphasis on the professor as the guardian of "academic knowledge" rather than

their ability to merely transmit content to their students. He states plainly when answering the question of what is the primary role of the professor that it is not teaching. However, in this moment the teaching to which S4 is referring is not teaching in the obvious sense of the word. Instead what he is articulating is that teachers should not be telling students specifically what to learn. Rather the professors should present students with opportunity to learn, carefully considered regulated knowledge, with the decision to take up this learning being left to the student. This passage also offers a deeper understanding of S4's comprehension of the information he is interested in obtaining from his university education. By looking to professors as guardians/keepers of the standards of academic knowledge it might be assumed that he is interested in gaining access to disciplinary thinking.

When discussing the value of the teacher and the textbook S4 stated that he preferred the textbook "slightly more" because, "there's only so much time for lecture or whatever…like within a week you get your three hours of lecture, [but] you probably read sixty or seventy pages [from the textbook]." Consequently, S4 felt that the textbook was where the student gleaned the majority of their information, making the lecture a "guide" for what chapters or sections needed to be more carefully examined. When asked whether or not he thought this was acceptable he said:

> I think it's okay…The only alternative would be to have more lecture time or teaching time, and that could never be a bad thing. [But] like at this level it's not unreasonable to have the expectation that you are going to do a lot of work on your own, and not even just like reading things, but figuring things out on your own, teaching yourself.

In these passages it seems that S4's notion of using the textbook as the primary source knowledge, guided by the professor and the lectures, relates two factors. First is an extension

of the idea he presented in the previous paragraphs. If it is not the primary role of the professor to provide students with the answers then it stands to reason that students would have to use the textbook, exercise their intellectual prowess and teach themselves.

The second factor that can be related to this statement comes from S4's understanding of the professor as the guardian of "academic knowledge". S4 sees this as being the primary role of the professor within the university and by implication a position that would occupy a great deal of time, meaning that students would have to "teach" themselves some of the content of the disciplinary body of knowledge guarded by the professors. Of course this position held by professors is valued within the university, as professors indeed have the responsibility to and interest in guiding the way in which their knowledge is utilized. But, for S4 his acceptance of this reality seems to be less than complete as he states that more teaching time "could never be a bad thing." In many respects this reflects the pragmatic approach S4 takes to the University as here he is able to recognize that more teaching time would be ideal. He compensates for that lack of instruction by contentedly teaching the material to himself weaving into his understanding of university education that such an expectation is reasonable.

It is interesting to note that S4 contradicted the position of most of the other students interviewed when he drew a positive connection between his ability to learn and being entertained in class. More specifically he stated, "Those are the [classes] you remember", suggesting that "[If] you remember a funny prof or an interesting prof then you are going to associate whatever the information was with him or her, so it's going to stay with you longer". Entertainment, it seems, enables a situation in which a professor, who might also be considered "enthusiastic" and well "prepared", becomes a "good teacher" because students

are better able to retain concepts presented in entertaining ways. The reason this particular statement is significant is that it seemingly disconnects from, his previous statement about self-teaching and the assumption that it was an effective means of education. However, it becomes important to recollect the alternative definition of teaching established for S4, wherein teaching is not spoon feeding information, but, through things like preparation, enthusiasm and entertainment, creating the opportunity for students to teach themselves.

Additionally, the notion that university teaching should be "entertaining" opens a new avenue for discussion of how the university classroom could be structured. As suggested in the literature review some of the debate surrounding the introduction of entertainment into the classroom has been negative because of the connection it makes to popular media. However, with the growing metamorphosis of universities into corporations coupled with the success of the entertainment industry the feeling expressed by S4 is not out of place. This is further exemplified when S4 went on to suggest that an entertaining class helped students' attendance because when a class was entertaining it "felt like you [were] there for a reason." This comment is particularly interesting because of the implications it has for student learning. If it can be assumed that some student learning is mediated by an entertaining performance, as S4 seems to advocate, how much are students learning in lectures that are more seriously delivered. Should professors strive towards making their classes "entertaining" and what are the implications this has for the academy?

Unlike many other students, S4 had not ever felt the need to alter his way of thinking about some material to ensure that he received a good grade from a professor. According to S4 the reason for this was that he was able to impartially discuss a topic that did not necessarily connect with his own personal beliefs. Given his response it seemed important to

ask this student whether or not having the ability to take on another's point of view was an asset to which he replied:

> I wouldn't really say it's an asset. [But] I do think that there is…value to courses and content [which] make you, to a certain extent, makes you think outside of the way that you normally would and consider issues that you already have locked up in your head.

Based on this statement it seems this student is describing the generally understood definition of critical thinking; taking on the perspective of another person, or another side of the argument, allowing him to gain new "information" or new insight into the topic. This speaks further to the type of information S4 was interested in gaining from his university education. S4's vision of the professor as guardian necessitates the need for the student to have a greater acceptance of the professor's particular method of analysis and argumentation, which it appears that he has. Based on S4's statements it seems that the flow of information is uni-directional, as he does not specifically mention the other side of critical thinking that opens the door for students to engage in knowledge creation. However, it can be seen from his discussion that he is "[re]considering issues that [he] already [had] locked up in [his] head", which suggests some interaction within the student between the new information presented by the professor and his previous understandings.

S4 also had a unique attitude towards teaching evaluations. When asked what he thought about these tools he replied: "…I think they are good in lots of ways…if professors use them in that kind of way…and if professors actually read [them]; I think they'd be very useful." However, he went on to say, "Obviously I don't have any false ideas that anybody's career actually hinges on whether they get good or bad evaluations." Intriguingly, very shortly after S4 gives the initial endorsement of these evaluative tools, saying "they're good",

potential barriers to their use-value are offered by S4. Within the very first sentence of his response he states that teaching evaluations are useful "*if* professors use them in that kind of way" and "*if* professors read [the comments]". S4 then goes on to say that he does not have any "false ideas" professors' careers hinge on the evaluations given by students. In this instance it is S4's recognition that there are in fact few consequences to professors who are not receiving good evaluations from students that is particularly interesting. When S4 was originally asked what "good teaching" meant to him he replied that it was a teacher, whose classroom presentations suggested that teaching was viewed by the professor as being an important activity in their lives and in their careers. However, if there are no consequences for what students view as poor teaching, stemming from the course evaluations, as stated by S4, then what incentives exist for professors, whose time is already limited by other responsibilities to provide "good teaching"?

This discrepancy between "good teaching" and the ability to provide "good teaching" identified in S4's narrative continued when he stated that the university as an institution places little emphasis on undergraduate teaching. He explained:

> …People are going to come to the school anyway so the real value is and what brings people to [the] school…is its reputation…so how good its professors are and then that's qualified by [the] focus in their papers and how much they publish and the research that they do.

Furthermore, the only places S4 thought that students' actual learning would be judged was in Faculties like "Education" and "Nursing", where "the quality of the product (learning)" could be judged by students' professional peers. As such S4 looked "at whatever learning [he gained]… [as being for his] own means [and therefore his] own responsibility". Again this is

a reflection of the very pragmatic approach taken by S4 to university. Perhaps as a result of his experience as a fifth year student he has very particular goals (Law school or Secondary education) which he intends to accomplish. Therefore, the potential disappointment suffered when not receiving "good teaching" as he understands it is outweighed by his drive to grasp the discipline. Reflecting his drives and sense of accomplishment in reaching some of those goals S4 stated throughout the interview that he is pleased with the time that he has spent at the University of Alberta, echoing the students discussed in the survey literature (see Chapter 2) saying "overall [his time at university has] been very good".

Master/Apprentice Pattern:

The pattern that emerged from S4's interview narrative was quite different from that of S2. In contrast to the emphasis on inspiration and experimentalism, S4 characterizes teaching/learning in what I have described as the "master/apprentice" pattern. This characterization developed out of S4's recognition of the professor as the guardian of a disciplinary knowledge, which he as a student seeks to comprehend, possibly to replicate. As such S4, like a carpenter's or sculptor's apprentice, needs to have the art, technique and knowledge of the 'master' teacher so that he would be able to reproduce it, in the same way a carpenter or sculptor's apprentice might reproduce a table or sculpture. But is seems also important that the 'master' understands and is able to judge adequately the 'apprentice's ability, competence and level of preparation. Disciplinary knowledge is potentially embodied in the teacher who acts as the guardian or gatekeeper to the discipline. The ideal student has a responsibility to study what the teacher has already mastered and to learn how to learn so that the apprenticing student can become a guardian in the future.

This is also an epistemologically driven model in which it is the professor's responsibility to be rigorous about the standards of knowledge production and transmission, thereby allowing for disciplinary continuity. Students rely on the high standards of the professor because the "good" professor is entrusted with the responsibility for showing the way to the "truth" of a subject field. However, this is not to suggest that the student completely buys into this knowledge, rejecting their own perspectives. Instead these students, or at least S4, ideally recognize the utility of having access to the very particular methods of knowledge production fashioned by each discipline to use creatively for their own purposes. As such knowledge to this student is disciplinary and it becomes their responsibility to be good re-producers of the knowledge bestowed to them by the professor. In many respects the approach that S4 seems to take to learning and knowledge relates very closely to one of the paradoxes posed by Ellsworth (1997) who suggests that while teaching and learning are impossible tasks we continue to teach and learn. That is despite the fact that S4 may not necessarily completely accept the version of knowledge provided to him by the professor on a personal level, he does assimilate and utilize that knowledge. Hypothetically at least, this may be demonstrated by asking S4's professors whether or not he had mastered their lessons. If they are able to answer affirmatively then it might be said that S4 has managed to become a good scholar and faithful reproducer of the rules of that particular system of knowledge, setting aside his personal opinions. This demonstrates Ellsworth's (1997) suggestion that while a teacher can never know if a student has completely understood their knowledge, students are capable of its impersonation. Consequently, in this relationship power comes to reside in the academic community of scholars belonging to particular disciplinary fields.

Student 8:

Student eight (S8) was in his first year of university and in the Faculty of Engineering, but was switching into the Faculty of Arts, contemplating doing his degree in either Religious Studies or Sociology. He made the decision to leave Engineering because, while he could do the work, he was interested in people and how they interact with each other and thought he was able to satisfy that interest in the Faculty of Arts. S8 was recruited from a class of 120 students. Overall he was very quiet and thoughtful, and took a moment or two to think before answering every question. As well, there were several moments during the interview when it was obvious that S8 was at a loss for how to articulate his thoughts, stumbling over his words and finally settling on "interaction" as a descriptor for the relations he was trying to describe. For him "good teachers" were those who "you can actually talk to…someone who goes beyond the course material and actually maybe gets to know their students on some level." On the surface it seems S8 was interested in having access to more knowledge than is perhaps provided by the average lecturer, as his statement of good teachers refers to those who "go beyond the course material". Yet his comment that teachers should in addition to going beyond the course material "[get] to know their students on some level" points to another consideration. Although what that "level" implied was not explored with S8, a potential proposal that might explain his desires relates to the relationship students have with primary and secondary school teachers. This revelation is relevant because S8 came directly from high school to university. Unlike universities' large and often anonymous classrooms, high school environments are thought to be characterized by thoughtful interaction between individuals in a safe and shared space. The success of this interaction demands the teacher have knowledge of the student that enables a more individualized approach to learning.

The relationship desired by S8 was then contrasted by talk of professors with whom this relationship was not possible. These professors "just [go up] there… [and] were just there to rattle off the facts and what not and [then] they would just leave. They wouldn't really recognize the students." It is, I believe, in this statement that the key to S8's idealized relationship becomes clear. Recognition in this moment can be understood as having a level of mutual respect for each other's humanness, suggesting that S8 wanted professors to see him, making eye contact, ask for his thoughts or the thoughts of other students, and acknowledge that students were not simply empty vessels. Expanding on the previous thought S8 went on to say that when professors did not "recognize" him, he felt like just "another number".

Still discussing "good teaching", S8 went on to say on the topic of recognizing students; "and that's what Professor B tries to do and a couple of my other professors are doing. I think I just got really lucky this semester, 'cause I have heard some really bad stories and I haven't experienced it." Therefore, it would appear that S8 is having his desires for acknowledgement met by some of his professors; however, what is of particular interest in this statement is his notion that he is "lucky". This was a sentiment echoed by several of the other students throughout the course of their interviews when discussing the quality of teaching they have experienced thus far at the University of Alberta. But when S8 was pressed on whether or not he had ever experienced poor teaching he said "no". Moreover S8 characterized his experience at university as being "very good".

A potential reason for this disconnection between S8's present inexperience with poor teaching and expectation of poor teaching may come from the fact that students, prior to entering the university, really have no comprehension of what a university experience entails.

For instance, S8, "…expected a difference; [he] just didn't know what kind." Oftentimes, the only concrete understanding that students have is that it will be harder than high school (Pocklington and Tupper, 2002). One potential source of knowledge about this experience may come from the popular media. For example, consider the recent film *Accepted* (2006), wherein the main character, Bartelby Gaines, goes to a college to check out what "real" college classes are like. In one scene he is seated in a classroom, in front of a large speaker, from which the voice of a professor in another classroom emits. Shortly into the scene the viewer realizes that this is an "overflow" class, and the unfortunate students here do not even get the benefit of seeing their professor give the lecture, let alone having the personal contact described by S8. In another class Gaines visits, a droll professor lectures on economics and confused about the subject matter, Gaines leans over to the student seated next to him to ask "What's going on?" This student, who has been listening intently, loudly whispers back "Don't bother me! My whole life is riding on an A in this class." In both of these examples a wide gulf exists between student and professor. Physical space separates student from professor in the first example and mental space separates them in the second. Here it is taken for granted that students and professors do not interact. Students in these examples are presented as interchangeable cogs, because there is no "recognition" of students.

The idea of learning, according to S8, has very little to do with obtaining facts or information regarding a particular subject. What was of greater importance to him were the "connections" he was able to make between the ideas and facts. For instance, he spoke extensively and excitedly about a chemistry class he had taken wherein these "connections" began occurring as he studied for the final exam, saying "I could see connections to all of it and that was really great…" However, these connections sought by S8 were not only within a

single subject area, but between every piece of information he was collecting. In this way he was able to see the relevance of the material which was of great importance to him. This meant, consequently, that S8 was open to different experiences saying several times during the interview that he did something just to "give it a shot", seemingly seeing university as an opportunity to "[grow] as a person" rather than only obtaining the qualifications for a job. Furthermore, these experiences allowed for a greater number of connections to be made enabling S8 to have a wider world view. Therefore, for this student university was about the pursuit of knowledge for its intrinsic value and for the potential to grow as a person.

Revisiting the feeling that he had been "lucky" so far in the teaching he has received, S8 stated, with a sense of astonishment that he had not had to use his textbooks extensively in Engineering "aside from assignments." However, for the Arts classes he was taking "…There's a lot more emphasis on the textbook because it really complements the way that [professors] teach. A couple of my [professors] said that they won't bother reciting what's in the textbook; they are going to talk about other stuff." Consequently, for S8 the textbook was "just another side of the course" extending the base of knowledge to which he had access. Interestingly, the use of the textbook in this way was not lamented by S8, as the tone of his description was not masked by the regret or disappointment evident in the voices of other students. Instead for S8 the textbook enabled him to have another perspective on the course material, thereby, expanding further his ability to make connections and to assemble knowledge into larger interconnecting patterns.

For S8 the teaching evaluations were "too short" and "very, very non-specific." He suggested that perhaps there should be, "…more written response, more…directed questions. Like there's always on the bottom you can fill out some comments on the back and what not,

but sometimes I found that it's just what elements of this course that could be better…" S8 calls for greater specificity on the teacher evaluation forms, though he is not asked for further details on what this might look like. However, based upon his comment some interpretations might be made of what S8 would like to have included in course evaluation forms. To begin, while he mentions that there are already written response questions on the forms, he states that they only deal with aspects of the "course" that could be better. Given this statement it might seem that this student wants to critique the professor's ability to fulfill his desire for recognition, not necessarily or only the content of the class. This is intriguing because according to this student he has yet to experience poor teaching, which might require this kind of critique, leaving the question of what a critique of the professor of the class could accomplish.

Of all of the responses to the question of whether or not the student has ever felt the need to alter their way of thinking about a particular topic in order to get a good grade S8's was the most unique. He said while, "I haven't experienced that yet…I am pretty sure that I will eventually; that I am going to end up with some prof that's going to be pretty hard on something and they are going to grade more on opinion than on actual presentation." He then said that he did not agree with this "because [the professors] are just basing [the student's grade] on their own opinion without taking the opportunity to look at another side of the argument. They are just saying that if you don't agree with me you're wrong…" In these statements it seems that S8 is again lamenting lack of recognition by professors of students. That is in the situation outlined by S8 he fears being treated like a non-person, who can only imperfectly mimic the professors thoughts and opinions. But more importantly it is S8's certainty that he will be faced with some form of terrible teaching. This I find most

interesting. By the time this interview was conducted S8 had completed nearly two semesters of classes at the University of Alberta and had, in his words, been "very lucky" not to have encountered poor teaching. Therefore, the question then becomes how does this student maintain his certainty that poor teaching is simply waiting to strike him?

Maintaining his contention that poor teaching exists S8 also stated that the university as an institution does not value teaching as much as it should because, "there is still a lot of professors out there that don't give a crap about the students." Further explaining that "I don't know if it comes from that they had horrible professors when they were students and they just feel a little bit of a vendetta…I really don't know what it is, but there are still a lot of professors out there that don't care." Most remarkably, in this case it is not S8's suggestion that professors do not "care", but his suggestion that present poor teachers are seeking "revenge" against students for the poor teaching that was inflicted upon them. S8 did not mention a single moment when he had experienced this vengeance in any of his classes. In fact he went out of his way to state that all of his professors were "good" and many had even made strides towards fulfilling his desire for "recognition".

Humanist/Contemplative Pattern:

Unlike the patterns determined for the other students S8's pattern was the most difficult to recognize as his interview focused on the seemingly divergent notions of "recognition" by professors and "connections" between knowledge. However, after careful consideration it became apparent that there was a link between S8's usage of these two terms and it was from this comprehension that the title for this pattern was created. "Humanist/contemplative" combines the idea that for S8 it was of the utmost importance that teachers treat students as individuals, developing a relationship which enabled students to focus on gaining and

understanding knowledge as a quest that is valuable in and of itself. In this respect, learning is the end, not the means to an end. If the teacher recognizes students as being human beings in a similar pursuit for knowledge students can then focus on gathering knowledge and making the connections needed to ensure that knowledge is integrated into their own world view.

Learning, however, is the process through which the student develops the ability to make connections between the factual and theoretical information provided by the teacher. This means that for a student like S8 the need to make connections independently of the teacher's guidance is less important if the relationship with the professor has already been established. Given this break, between recognition from the professor and creating connections between pieces of knowledge, S8 is seeking a space from which he can create absolute difference from the professor's understanding of the course material. That is, in no way is the manner in which S8 understands the material dependent on the professor's presentation. The recognition by the professor of their common pursuit of knowledge provides S8 with the space to create his own understandings. As he said during the interview the connections he makes with material happen for the most part outside of class. Consequently, power in this pattern is, in many respects, shared between the student and the teacher, since both the student and the professor must contribute to the creation of the relationship sought by these students. Learning and teaching, therefore, become, in this pattern, a relationship of mutual respect and acknowledgement, perhaps silent, of a common quest such that both parties are empowered.

Student 7:

Student seven (S7) was in her second year of university and talked about making a transfer from the Faculty of Arts into the Faculty of Science, since she was not admitted into the Faculty of Business. Her ultimate goal was to gain employment in the banking industry and in preparation for this was taking mathematics and business as her major and minor respectively. Like S8 she too was recruited from a class of approximately 120 students. S7 answered all of the questions very quickly; she was articulate and sure in her responses, leaving little room for questioning or uncertainty on the part of the researcher. When asked what good teaching entailed for her she replied that the professor, "Preferably [should have] no accent… [and speak] really clearly and loudly so that everyone can hear." She went on to explain, "I guess [I also] like being able to be like, make appointments, and get help, [and professors] not being condescending." Contrasting each of the other students discussed until this point, S7 listed very practical characteristics of teaching as being of importance to her. For S7 traits of a "good teacher" include things like not having an "accent", speaking loud and clear, and their "accessibility" outside of the classroom. In this way her comments can be most closely related to those made by the authors from the first section of the literature review chapter. S7 seems to conform nicely to both Readings' (1996) and Pocklington and Tupper's (2002) vision of the corporatization of the university wherein knowledge becomes a consumable product subject to the desires and perceived satisfaction of students conceived as consumers.

In response to her comment regarding condescending professors she was asked if she ever felt professors being condescending towards her. She described a meeting she had with one of her math professors during which she explained to him that she had read the notes, but

still did not understand the material. All the professor would tell her was "it's in the notes; you should see it's in the notes. You should know that, [it's] in the notes", which she related in the interview with a great deal of emphasis even tapping her finger on the table as if pointing to notes. Ultimately, S7 was not able to gain a satisfactory answer to her question, and left the professor's office incredibly disappointed, vowing never to take another class in that subject area. While the "condescending" nature of this experience is certainly open to multiple interpretations it impacted S7's ability to interact with professors as she said she always felt "rushed" during meetings and unable to "sit down and be like [say that] I really don't understand."

Consequently, it would seem that S7 is looking for a very different kind of learning than any of the other students interviewed. When discussing the above example S7 went to great lengths to describe her need for plain answers to her questions. She recalled an instance when after a professor had given a long explanation regarding one of her questions, she stated simply "so what you meant was this…" distilling what might have been a detailed and likely complex explanation into a single sound bite. As such it would seem that S7 desires her "bucket to be filled", with facts needed to pass the exams, get good grades and ultimately as she puts it make "a lot of money in my little office". In this way S7 seems to epitomize Paulo Freire's vision of the current education system, wherein students are viewed as empty vessels to be filled with facts (1993). Ironically this method is called the "banking method" of education and enables students like S7 to make an efficient transition into the business world. For S7 a university education was understood as a means to an end, in particular, to a well-paying position in the financial sector.

S7 preferred the professor to simply lecture and, by implication, the student to take notes. While she admitted that some classes, like a German language course she was taking, required minimal group work "for big classes…if I'm doing it just for a GPA booster I want to just have the prof lecture to me, okay memorize [it] and [write a] multiple choice exam." This statement, consequently, implies that to S7 there is something intrinsically less complicated about classes with straight lecture and multiple choice exams, since she can use them as "GPA boosters". She went on to explain that she felt that she could not trust other students to do their portion of the work when assigned to groups potentially because this impeded her ability to gain some facts efficiently for the exams. She went on to say that she liked classes of 100 people because, "you are able to have discussion in the class, [since] people are not like, "I am too scared to talk in front of huge group," but at the same time it's big enough that like the prof might not know you and…call directly on you." The thought of being called upon seemed particularly disturbing to S7 as she truly enjoyed the potential anonymity offered by large classes, wherein the professor could not call directly on her and question her fact retention, but small enough to allow her the opportunity to participate if she chose.

When she later discussed the role of the professor S7 maintained her practical perspective on university education saying the professor's role was "to provide the information you needed to pass the exams." Though it could be argued that what S7 is looking for is for the professor to "teach" her in the same way as any of the other students, there is something substantially different about the teaching she seeks. S7, it seems, is interested in gaining only that knowledge which pertains directly to the exam and ultimately to her GPA. At no point does S7 mention the ideas of learning and teaching referred to by the

other students, instead focusing all of her attention upon her ultimate pecuniary goal of making "a lot of money". Of course this is not to suggest that there is anything wrong with her perspective. However, it does not seem to align closely with the commonly held perspective of professors, who, like S8, might be said to view knowledge as being valuable for its own sake.

As a result of her response to the question of the role of the professor within the university it was not surprising that S7 stated that she preferred the professor and the class notes to the use of the textbook, since in her vision of education the teacher should provide you with the knowledge needed to pass exams. However she went on to say that "in some classes you just c[illegible]al with the prof [and] you have to use the textbook…" As many of the other students S7 wanted to be able to see the professor as the primary source of information regarding the course material, and like many of the other students used the textbook only out of necessity.

This alignment continued when an interesting contradiction emerged between this student's seeming desire for the precise facts needed to pass multiple choice exams and her ability to use that knowledge novelly for writing assignments. When asked whether she ever felt the need to change her opinion to obtain a good grade, in a manner similar to S2, it was not until after her paper had been returned that she realized that she "should have written it differently in order to [capture the professor's opinion]." She went on to speak particularly about her English class where, according to S7, the professor did not accept anything that was not their own opinion on the subject, saying that:

> …it would be hard because you'd be like okay I think this is [the proper theme for a novel] and like you'd provide your feedback or whatever and then [the professor

would] be like well I don't think so and then she'd be like what about this. And you're like well yeah that could be [a symbol] too but I picked this one, is that not right? But…then it would be like listen to what she has to say, take it down and spit it out.

Listening to S7 respond to this question at the time of the interview it is readily apparent that this need to conform to the thinking of the professor bothered her a great deal. However, this sentiment was in stark contrast to earlier desires to have the "facts" that could be directly applied to multiple choice exams. In this case it seems that S7's black and white understanding of education turns to a shade of grey as she feels her opinions should be just as valid as those of the professor. As a result the question remains of whose opinions are to be taken seriously and why? Ultimately S7 stated that it did not matter to her as she said, "…but then I don't really care. Like I'll get a good mark if I do it, so [I] don't really care." What becomes interesting in this instance therefore is the question: if this student really does not care if she needed to "spit out" the exact thoughts of the professor then why does she also describe it as "hard", because she had put an effort into providing "support" for her particular perspective?

Finally when discussing whether or not the university as an institution values teaching S7 stated that she felt it did to some degree because, "…most of the professors are okay". Going on to say that "a lot of them (professors) have tried to get to know their students or like a lot of them are available for like for office hours and they're like, "make an appointment"…They seem pretty open to giving you help." In this case S7 is drawing a connection between the willingness professors have to aid students with problems and the level of caring demonstrated by the institution for undergraduate teaching. However, this is despite her admission that she has had many difficulties in obtaining help from professors for

the problems she is having with her classes always feeling rushed, and the experience she related about being forced to conform to the professor's way of thinking in the English class.

Credentialing/Consumerist Pattern:

The narrative derived from S7's interview is the most divergent from the other students considered until this point. Her usage of phrases such as "I want to make a lot of money in my little office" lent themselves to being connected with a vision of students as consumers and led to the title of this pattern "credentialing/consumerist". S7 was primarily interested in obtaining a university degree for the economic and cultural capital it would provide. That is, this student desires to possess the essential facts required for examination purposes so that she may obtain the grades which, accumulated over the 120 credits required in a degree program will, through the administrative technology of the registrar's office, be transformed into the desired credential, a parchment which stands as proof of baccalaureate status. Ultimately, this means that the university degree is not valued for the knowledge or personal growth it represents, but as a currency to be exchanged in the labor market for some degree of job security and a reasonable salary. In this model, it seems the significance of the concepts student, professor and professor-student relationship is confined to the economics of credentialing. As such, for students like S7 the notion of creating absolute difference is not relevant as the knowledge embodied by the professor is valued as part of an exchange relationship in which the investment required for memorizing information relevant for exams has its rewards later in future job offers. S7 seems to be interested in gaining access to the professor's knowledge so that she can apply it to the exams and getting her the grades she needs to enter the banking industry. Consequently, in terms of the knowledge to which students have access professors have a tremendous amount of power. However, in terms of

consumer power, it also became clear that S7 attempts to apply pressure on the professor to provide a service, in this case in the form of a 'right' answer. But, in the example provided the professor re-exerts his power in an act of refusal saying "it's in the notes" or, in other words, you have to work for it.

Summary of Narratives

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter each of these four students was selected for in-depth treatment because of the extent of prior thought they seemed to have given to the questions asked in the interview and thus my ability to discern some internal coherence or pattern to their perspective on good teaching and learning. Interestingly, these patterns varied in significant ways. In fact S2 and S7 had radically different expectations with respect to the meanings they associated with university education, with the narratives of S4 and S8 falling somewhere in between these two extremes. Despite this variation there were two unifying themes present in their narratives. Regardless of each student's perspective and the difference in their expectations for the desired university experience the disappointment at not having their expectations fulfilled was shared. Whether it is S2 who had been unable to find the inspiration needed to perform his experiments or S7 whose market oriented vision of knowledge was complicated by professors and courses refusing to provide straight answers, parts of all students' expectations were left unmet. Additionally, not one of the students interviewed questioned the legitimacy of the professors' authority in the classroom; some students even offered explanations that absolved the professor of any responsibility for their disappointment. These two themes are left largely unresolved by the other interpretations offered, because they require an approach to teaching, learning and subjectivity not generally considered in the university classroom.

An Interpretation through a Lacanian Lens

This final interpretation employs a Lacanian psychoanalytic lens as a means to raise the possibility of unconscious factors impacting students' classroom experiences through an alternative examination of the four perspectives offered by the student interviews selected for this chapter. In so doing this approach can also propose an alternative way of thinking about the students' disappointment and the authority invested in the professor. For the purposes of this section the four narratives with undergraduates known as S2, S4, S8 and S7 and outlined above will be considered together. The decision was made to take this approach because it was not possible to perform an in-depth psychoanalytic analysis on the individual student narratives in their present form. Unlike Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000) who interviewed their subjects for a study of the fear of crime on two separate occasions, I was unable to conduct a follow-up interview. Regrettably, I missed the opportunity to transcribe, examine and explore the interviews to identify unresolved gaps and to then return to the students for a second interview. Consequently, the interviews conducted herein offer insights into varying systems of significance with respect to teaching and learning, but lack the level of detail on the "ignore-ances", anxieties, inconsistencies and avoidances needed to explore in-depth the significance of these in the manner of Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000). While it is possible to identify disappointment, inconsistency, and avoidance within a single interview, the absence of a second interview eliminates the possibility of returning to direct the questioning toward uncovering how these conversational strategies may function as defense mechanisms and indeed to explore what lies hidden beyond such defenses.

To begin this interpretation the "discourse of the university", outlined in Chapter 2, will be revisited. The reason for this choice is that this discourse provides a map that can be used

as one way to better understand the relationship between students and professors within the university classroom. In Chapter 2 this discourse was described as being "nothing but knowledge" (Bracher, 1994, p. 115), a system into which students must weave themselves, thereby becoming both the "means of production and surplus value of the system" (Bracher, 1994, p. 116), which seemingly places the focus of the discourse on the student. As a result of Bracher's interpretation of the discourse and this projects focus on the voice of the student it seems relevant to begin this revisitation of the "discourse of the university", with the student or objet petit *a* rather than the professor (S_1).

For the purposes of this work the objet petit *a* represents a student who is trying to gain access to the symbolic order of the university. In this moment the student is "new" to this symbolic order, however, these students are also members of many other symbolic orders, which place different demands on the subject. This connection to other symbolic orders means that the subject coming to the symbolic order of the university already possesses particular attitudes and coping mechanisms unique to each of these other orders. For example consider S2 who had a great deal of experience with post-secondary education and training from the U.K., a different symbolic order, over the course of three decades. During our interview S2 called upon one particular experience from this other order to describe his perception of "good teaching and learning". This was the moment when his social psychology professor proposed a non-pharmaceutical headache remedy, which was particularly poignant to S2 who, while losing some of the fine details of that experience retained the feeling it gave him. That is S2 could still feel the rush of suddenly seeing another side of the same story and the vulnerability and excitement of reconstituting one's sense of self in light of this new discovery. Thereafter, S2 internalized the expectation of having this

type of experience in other educational settings, but sadly, according to him he was unable to repeat the desired experience in Canada. Experiences like these put S2, and all students, in excess of the symbolic order of the university because its existing structure is not designed to incorporate each individual's expectations. When S2 has attempted to integrate these previous experiences into his current situation he is told that his essay takes the wrong position. Having received a lower mark than normal he feels that he is being punished.

To become a part of the symbolic order of the university, which carries with it particular advantages such as the potential for high paying jobs and recognition from wider society as being a "university graduate", students are asked to give up their excesses. However, this is a difficult task for students as they have built a part of their subjectivity (ego-ideal [I(o)]) on them. That is through the process of becoming a member of other symbolic orders particular attitudes and behaviors, which become excessive to the symbolic order of the university, are integrated by the student into their subjectivity or sense of self. Therefore, to become members of the symbolic order of the university students are essentially being asked to give up a portion of their identity. This leaves the $ or split subject. At the moment when students give up their excesses they are left vulnerable, as this shedding of excesses is demanded of the student with each new symbolic order they enter leaving them perpetually missing an important piece of their sense of self. In fact it might be suggested that many students enter the university in search of that very piece of their subjectivity. In some ways this search was exemplified by S8 who was seeking a new way to relate to other people in the world, which to some people is considered achievable only with careful study in an institution of advanced learning.

Many students coming to university see the professor as the embodiment of the knowledge (the "subject supposed to know") needed to fill their gap, which might begin to explain their seemingly collective recognition of the legitimacy of professorial authority. Unfortunately, what students may fail to realize is that the search for that which they have given up is never-ending, because of the nature of Lacanian desire. That is, in the desire to fill the gap they feel their subjectivity can not be satisfied, because once one gains that which they originally desired a new desire replaces it, meaning that the subject is left forever wanting. An example of how desire functions can be posited for S7, whose ultimate goal was to "make a lot of money in [her] little office", working in a bank. According to Lacanian desire, however, once she has obtained that goal another such as the need for more money or the need to escape the banking industry altogether inevitably replaces the original. This means that S7, like all students, will be left forever chasing their next desire.

The relinquishing of one's excesses is also complicated by the master signifier (S_1), which attempts to represent the point of reference for all other signifiers (Evans, 2001). That is it attempts to be the final answer to all questions posed to it and in so doing attempts to be everything to all subjects. As a result of this the master signifier must defend itself against other competing signifiers, which can usurp the master signifier's position. This means that it must set up controls over other signifiers that come under its purview. With respect to the university it might mean that on one hand the symbolic order of the university (read master signifier) tells students that "excesses" such as the desire for the freedom to contradict the professor in the form of a paper (S2), or the desire for the exact answers to exam questions (S7) are important parts of what it means to be within the university. Essentially, this suggests to students that they do not have to sacrifice their excesses to gain access to the

benefits of the symbolic order. But on the other hand the symbolic order seemingly places in the hands of professors a tremendous amount of power, in the form of grade assignment. This power is used by professors, intentionally or unintentionally, to police how knowledge is utilized by students, thereby ensuring a faithful reproduction of the symbolic order. The consequences of the imposition of this power can be seen in the reaction of S7 to her English class wherein she learned after receiving some poor grades on her assignments that she simply had to "listen to what [the professor had] to say, take it down and spit it [back] out".

In this way the symbolic order can be likened to the super ego, which simultaneously represents the law, and its antithesis (Evans, 2001) demanding that subjects enjoy all, but punishing them when they transgress the law. This slippage occurs because the symbolic order too has gaps in its formation, which can not be covered, and allows subjects to interpret or misinterpret the law (Evans, 2001). These gaps exist because the symbolic order/master signifier can not hope to encompass all signifiers, like students' excesses. In order to mitigate instances when these gaps become obvious to subjects, the individual creates fantasies. These creations allow them to "fill in" the gaps in the symbolic order enabling subjects to live somewhat consistent lives. Fantasies, according to psychoanalytic theory, are incredibly important because they serve as protection for the subject from the lack in the Other. That is, for example, they serve as a buffer between students, who see the professor as the "subject supposed to know" and professors who can not hope to fulfill the impossible nature of the student's desire. For instance consider the certainty expressed by S8 that he will be faced with some form of terrible teaching despite the reality that all of his university professors to date had been good. One possible explanation for this behavior is that by creating this vision for himself S8 is masking the somewhat disappointing nature of the teaching he has

experienced. More specifically the expectations with which S8 came to the university have not been met, but to save his conscious self from this realization he created the vision of terrible teaching awaiting him behind every new classroom door. The importance of such fantasies is that they enable the student to function within the symbolic order, despite its many internal inconsistencies. If these coping mechanisms were not in place there is a possibility that the subject could, in the extreme, slip into psychosis.

With that outline in place a turn can now be made to the professor or S_2 in the "discourse of the university". Like the students, professors also inhabit alternative symbolic orders, which have made particular demands on the professor and their excesses. The most obvious of these is perhaps the symbolic order from which professors gather the knowledge they provide to students. In many respects this symbolic order (like most others) can be understood through Lacan's "discourse of the master", in which S_1 or the master signifier is in the place of the agent or actor, attempts to colonize all knowledge (S_2). But this colonization is never complete leaving a surplus (a) and making the truth position in this discourse into the split subject. Or considered another way the master signifier can not hope to control all knowledge because of the surplus (i.e. excesses), meaning that any truth claimed by that order can not be absolute.

This can make the transmission of knowledge to students from the professors' symbolic order somewhat difficult. In this relationship the student is the entity towards which the professor directs their behavior (the Other) in the hopes of gaining some recognition. However, this recognition is highly specific because of the demands placed on the knowledge usage by the symbolic order. As such professors may feel the need to control how that knowledge is used by the student in an effort to legitimize a subject matter that is by nature

fluid. At times, according to students, this control is exerted by professors through the assignment of poor grades to those who attempt to resist or use the knowledge differently.

As such it would seem that professors and students are locked into a similar trap as each of them struggles to hold onto the excesses obtained from the other symbolic orders to which they belong, while still attempting to gain entry to the symbolic order of the university. Given these difficulties how are professors to deal with classes composed of students like those outlined in this chapter, and perhaps many others who did not attend the interviews conducted for this project? One potential solution comes from another of Lacan's discourses. The "discourse of the analyst" represents the end of the subject's journey through the other discourses (though the subject need not go through all of the discourses to get to this point) and helps the subject to understand that there will be no final thing that fills the void in their subjectivity. In this discourse it is the objet petit a, which is in the position of agent or actor, who in turn interacts with the split subject to produce a master signifier from which truth or knowledge can be gained by the subject. More specifically the subject here no longer seeks a single master signifier, but interacts with many of them simultaneously and as such the subject is provided a measure of freedom. This freedom develops from the fact that students can take parts of the other master signifiers which suit their needs and do not embrace a singular usage. Of all of the students interviewed perhaps the ones that most closely reflect this model of thought were S8 and S4. S8 described a sense of openness through his usage of the phrase "give it a shot", implying the ability to integrate into his sense of self multiple perspectives. The same could be said of S4 whose apprenticeship approach to university education has allowed him to not only recognize the professor's role as being comprised of

both teaching and non-teaching responsibilities and use this realization as an opportunity to incorporate knowledge from multiple sources.

Although it seems that this transition to the "discourse of the analyst" would be beneficial to both students' and professors' ability to interact successfully in the classroom it also demands a great sense of letting go of notions that are particularly important to each of them. Perhaps most importantly for students would be the abandonment of the idea that the professor is the embodiment of knowledge they need to fill the gap in their sense of self. While for professors it may be getting rid of the notion that the knowledge they possess must be transmitted to students perfectly so that students' knowledge become a mirror image of the professor's knowledge. Both students and professors have a tremendous amount of psychic energy invested in these ideas, meaning that any shift in their value has the potential to unbalance their fragile sense of self within the symbolic order. In some cases this shift can even cause psychic harm, a theme that will be further explored in the next chapter. Therefore, care must be taken when introducing a way of rethinking student relations to the professor, knowledge and power within the university through the use of something like the "discourse of the analyst".

Unlike the first two interpretive approaches taken to the student interviews, which are grounded in the descriptive statements provided through the interview dialogue between myself, the students and the literature, the Lacanian lens offers access to aspects of students' speech not possible through descriptive statements alone. That is, this lens takes the descriptive statements and investigates them in search of alternative meanings using the interpretive framework created by Lacan. The preliminary assumption of the existence of the unconscious enables the next assumption that there are alternative levels of meaning to the

words spoken by subjects' everyday. Therefore, in this work I was able to identify the students' deferral to the professors' authority and their sense of disappointment as being two potentially unconscious and certainly unexplored factors influencing student understandings of their experiences within the university.

The Lacanian lens does not take the self-articulated understanding of subjects for granted; instead it investigates more deeply in an effort to pose alternative explanations. In addition to the assumption outlined surrounding the unconscious there is another important assumption of this interpretive approach which needs to be mentioned. The discourses, diagrams and talk of the symbolic order, utilized throughout this work, are highly theoretical, making any application of it open to further scrutiny. That is none of the interpretations made herein can be thought to be fact or final. However, considering the data in this way has allowed for a closer examination of what students and teachers bring with them to the classroom from outside experiences that can ultimately complicate knowledge transmission. Almost certainly the depth and detail of an interpretation using the psychoanalytic lens would have been greater had two interviews been performed with the students. By speaking to students twice an initial analysis of the first interview could be undertaken, and returned to the students for further discussion and clarification, as such making the volume of potential material to be analyzed much greater. Due to the exploratory nature of this work, however, the interpretation, using Lacanian psychoanalysis, offered here provides a glimpse to the potential this approach has in examining interview material. This glimpse will be further lengthened and expanded upon in the next chapter wherein students and professors' reactions to the topic of harm will be explored.

Chapter 5

Harm

As in the preceding chapter, where I focus my attention on the voices of students and their experience, it was my initial intention to continue to do so in this chapter. However, shortly after beginning to write I realized that there was something very different about my research material on the topic of harm. It was the professors, not the students, who had the most concern with, and the most to say about, this specific issue. Therefore, I was forced to refocus the organization of this chapter from students to professors, leaving the question of why students had so little say. Keeping this in the back of my mind I have left aside, temporarily, the students' accounts of their experiences with harm. Instead I have chosen to highlight the distinct approaches expressed by the three professors from the original project discussed in the introductory and methodology chapters. However, a preliminary examination of even the professors' speech on the topic left many gaps, making for less than a complete understanding of harm. In an effort to alleviate this lack my own remembrances of these classes is woven into an examination of the professors' discussion of the topic. My recollections provide context and examples which highlight aspects of the professors' descriptions. Using this technique, I hope to make familiar a concept that seems, at first glance, strange.

Once this examination of the professors' understandings of harm is completed I then attempt to find some unifying theme among what appear to be three completely different ideas about harm and its consequences in the university classroom. This unifying theme enabled a return to the students' reluctant comments surrounding their experience with harm in the classroom. As such seven of the twelve students' responses to this interview question

have been introduced into the chapter. Similarly to the concerns that arose when conducting the analysis of the students' interviews in Chapter 4, the seven students whose comments were chosen for this chapter were articulate and seemed more open to discussing the topic than the other five students. Interestingly, comments of only two of the four students highlighted in the previous chapter were included here. With the inclusion of the students views on the topic of harm another level of complexity can be added to the present conceptualization of the university classroom and a potential explanation of this new understanding can be found through the integration of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Unlike Chapter 4 where this analysis was left until the end of the initial discussion of the four patterns, in this chapter Lacanian interpretation is woven throughout. This organization is possible in this section because of the nature of the subject of harm. Teaching and learning are topics that have only begun to be considered using Lacanian psychoanalysis, but harm or the feeling of harm is a topic that relates closely to this method's original usages. That is, psychoanalysts primarily work with people who are suffering from the consequences of harm. Building on the previous chapter this opens a greater space in which the classroom might begin to be seen differently, not as a harmless center for learning, but as a contentious space in which battles are waged for subjectivity.

Understanding Harm: The Professors Speak

In approximately fifteen years of formal education I had never thought of associating the word 'harm' with the classroom experience. When I was in elementary school, school was a place I went everyday to see friends; actual classes in retrospect seem like the means to achieving this social objective. Looking back on it now it was a routine, getting up in the morning going to work and play and returning home in the afternoon. I thought little of it,

just as you think little about any action until surveying its consequences. Moving into high school, school was still the thing I did everyday. There were, however, two distinct changes in how I saw the function of school, the first of which was the potential for receiving monetary rewards for performance as opposed to the simple praise of parents and teachers. Maintaining high grades throughout high school meant that you were eligible for scholarships. The second had to do with the consequences for not performing; not getting those good grades that would lead to scholarships meant that I couldn't go to university, and that option was inconceivable. It was not until my third year of university that I was exposed to the possible relation between harm and the classroom. Specifically, I was introduced to this relation through several conversations with three professors. Each of them talked about their desire not to harm students in their classes. Interestingly, this topic was not one that I raised as a question, but one the professors felt compelled to voluntarily introduce. When the term was first brought to my attention I was baffled. How could school be hurting me? What were the professors talking about? I went back to each of the professors a second time to ask these questions and to ask them for an explanation of what they meant.

One professor (Professor X), who measured the success of his class by the depth to which his students began to question their taken for granted notions of everyday life, spoke extensively about his apprehension in asking students to engage in this type of behavior. On the surface this might seem to be a very innocuous task as it could easily be argued that questioning taken for granted conceptions gives students a taste of what it means to practice "critical thinking". Being able to see a situation or experience from another position is highly valued, and in institutional terms it is an expectation for students to unemotionally make the transition from one view point to another all the while maintaining objective distance.

Professor X's concern, however, was not with whether or not students were able to verbalize some level of understanding of another's position. Instead he was concerned with those moments when the student's thinking moved beyond the other and came too close to the student's perception of self. In other words his goal it seemed was to destabilize some of the blocks, or psychological defenses, upon which students had built their understanding of who they were. As such potential harm for this professor lay in the destabilizing force of questioning subjectivity.

When considering this interpretation of Professor X's understanding of harm one vivid example of the destabilizing force of his questioning comes to mind. My class was discussing abortion and inevitably the discussion manifested itself in a debate over the pros and cons of pro-life and pro-choice. At several points the entire student panel was arguing quite heatedly, however, one student in particular seemed unwilling to budge even slightly from his position that abortion was murder. In fact he ultimately silenced all of the other members of the panel who sat tensely in their plastic stacking chairs awaiting the end of class. Finally, a female student stood from amongst the audience, made up of class-mates not directly participating in the panel, and began to chastise this student saying that she had had an abortion after becoming pregnant at a young age and deciding that she did not want to have the baby. She went on to explain that his comments hurt her deeply, she did not feel that she was a murderer and resented his implication that she was. After what seemed to me like an eternity the professor stepped in and dismissed the class. At this point the girl was sitting in her padded lecture theatre chair sobbing into the shoulder of a classmate and the student on the panel was left to quietly gather his things and "slink" from the class under the questioning eyes of the rest of us, who wondered why he had to make the girl cry?

This story illustrates nicely the type of classroom situations that explain the source of Professor X's apprehensions surrounding his classroom goals. Although the girl has likely, in North American culture, been witness to people objecting to the choice she made , there is something very different about hearing people object to one's choice through the distance created by things like the media and being "directly" accused by a fellow student calling "you" a murderer. The same might be said for the "accusing" student, as it is probably a strange situation indeed for a classmate to stand up and publicly admit to having participated in the action you have just finished categorizing as murder. This student was definitely at a loss for words, and it appeared to me that he did not want to incur further wrath from the female student since shortly after she began talking he fell silent.

At this moment, psychoanalytically speaking, there was a collision of the Real[36] with the protective fantasy ($\$ \Diamond a$) these students created in order to be able to function within their particular symbolic orders. The female student had made a decision and thereafter, was faced with the task of how to live with her choice in a culture where the morality of it is hotly debated. This may have meant creating in her unconscious mind a defense such as the following. She could not give the baby up for adoption because she would be too attached after carrying it to term, and since she could not take care of it, because she was so young and could not support herself and a baby, she felt she had no alternative but to have an abortion. Thus, she may have rationalized the reality of her participation in a procedure which some people have deemed the willful taking of life. Unfortunately, there exists a very uneasy détente between her defense and the ever present doubts that come with morally contested decisions. In this instance these doubts can be understood as the Real, or those

[36] The Real "emerges as that which is outside to language and inassimilable to symbolization. It is 'that which resists symbolization absolutely'..." (Evans, 2001, p. 159)

aspects of her rationalizations that could not be assimilated into her symbolic framework, which demands that a subject's sense of self as a good person worthy of love be maintained (ideal-ego). As the above story demonstrates, in a situation like a public outing in self-defense this can be tipped from time to time as the "real" of her decision came crashing into her conscious mind.

A similar break, psychoanalytically speaking, can be seen with the student who precipitated this episode. One can imagine in his circle of friends that his attitudes, when expressed, may pass unnoticed or perhaps be met with approval. It is also likely that a person close to him, in a similar situation, would be unwilling to report this fact to him, given his outspoken objections. Therefore, one might surmise that this was perhaps the first time he had come face to face with the "Other" side of the abortion story. The interjection of the female student into this discussion seemingly debunked what might have been the male student's cherished idea that abortions are sought out by unwed promiscuous teenagers looking for easy fixes for their lack of forethought. If this was the first public encounter of this kind, quite possibly the male student had never before considered that someone admitted into university would also be someone who had had an abortion. Recall the moment of "Che Vuoi?" from Chapter 2, when the subject is addressing the Other asking "you're telling me that, but what do you want with it, what are you aiming at?" (Zizek, 1989, p111) That is, on the unconscious level, the female student has become the male student's Other, as she caused a fundamental shift in his sense of self. Prior to this time his ego-ideal, or his internalization of the symbolic order, enabled him to have and express his particular views on abortion. But the Other with whom these previous views correlated has vanished as the female student might be said to have taken its place. She is now challenging how the male student can call

her a "murderer", without knowing her or the circumstances surrounding her decision and still think of himself as a good person? The comments of the female student forced, a normally unconscious transition from the imaginary[37] and symbolic orders into the conscious mind of this student leaving him looking, and quite likely feeling, vulnerable and exposed.

It could also be argued that this event was potentially harmful not only to the students directly involved, with the female student being reduced to tears after being called a murderer by a fellow classmate and the male student having his values questioned in such a public fashion, but at the same time to all students in the class. The audience witnessed a deeply personal and emotionally charged interaction between two fellow students, one that is generally saved for very private circumstances. At the time I remember being amazed that the male student had the boldness to speak of abortion with such intensity. Yet, when the female student stood up to confront him I was simply blown away by the fact that she was willing to expose such a personal experience to a group of complete strangers. I wanted to get away from the vision of the female student standing amongst the rows of the lecture theatre hurling her pain through her words to the male student sitting in what seemed like the centre of a spot light on a deserted stage. But I could not take my eyes away from the event. To this day this sequence of events remains fresh in my mind, to the point that even as I write this passage my heart races in that uncomfortable way it does when one witnesses a generally private confrontation on a public street. Consequently, I am left with a question: is the confrontation between ones fantasy and the Real something students should or should not be encouraged to face? What do students gain from such an encounter? How does the exposure to the Real contribute to the classroom experience?

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[37] The imaginary order is based in the formation of the ego in the mirror stage, meaning that the imaginary order is the seat of the subject's alienation from himself (see discussion in introduction) (Evans, 2001).

In talking with Professor X, he seemed unable to come up with definite answers to these kinds of questions. Using the example I described above, he reflected on the element of harm as a possible reason for not wanting to continue teaching in this particular fashion. Despite the ambivalence of this statement he continued to sustain the position that this type of experience was in fact important for students. He felt that they needed to face themselves without the solace of that version of self-hood deemed necessary by the ego-ideal not only for the sake of critical thinking, but to get them out of their comfort zone if only for a few moments, helping to ensure that they do not spend their entire lives mistaking the fantasy they call reality for something "Real". Looking back on this experience now I can say that regardless of my incredible discomfort at having to witness the interaction between the male and female students in this class I was able to learn something. I learned to be careful about what I say in a class discussion, to avoid making assumptions about the position of others and about the potential for harm to be inflicted notwithstanding ones best intentions. The male student, I believe, had no idea that what he was saying could elicit such a response from a classmate; he had probably not thought his words could have such an impact.

Simultaneously, Professor X understood that there were real consequences to opening this portion of the students' psyches. If too much of their fantasy is destabilized then students might be thrown into a world of despair and left with no hope of reconciliation. In the extreme, they may be thrown into either neuroses[38] or psychoses depending on the severity of their inability to reconcile their sense of self with their symbolic order. While I can not speak for the students directly involved in the abortion discussion it did have consequences for me. The episode plays back in my mind from time to time and now, as only memory can do, I

[38] A neurosis according to Lacan is the inability to reconcile one's sex (hysteric) or one's very existence (obsessional neuroses) (Evans, 2001).

watch the male student open his mouth and feel as if I am watching the unsuspecting character from a horror movie walking up the stairs in the abandoned house straight into the arms of the serial killer. In my mind I want to jump up from my lecture theatre chair and shout "Stop! You don't know what you're doing. Stop!" But alas he continues, and just as the character meets their end so too does the male student. Of course my sense of subjectivity was not so terribly shaken as to plunge me into psychoses, but this scene still haunts me and has changed my understanding of classroom dynamics in a way that would not have otherwise occurred. Naturally this situation does happen in other classes, but is generally unforeseen by the professor, a consequence of social interaction. However, for Professor X, this was a foreseeable outcome as he actively created circumstances in which the above situation could result.

The second professor, Professor Y, like Professor X, also raised the possibility of harm occurring in the classroom and he too felt that "harming" or challenging student's preconceptions was a valuable experience. He said that it helped the students to begin to think about their world in different ways. I recall vividly one day when Professor Y brought with him to class a book which depicted people in New York City who participated in body manipulation. The pictures were shocking to me. Most of them involved the piercing of various body parts with numerous objects, but one picture, in particular, remains etched into my memory. The photo depicted a young man who it seemed quartered his face with a scalpel; there was a line from the top of his forehead down beneath his chin and another line from one ear across his cheekbones and to the other. The four sections of his face thus created were then peeled back and held open by a number of long pins revealing the tissue and muscle normally hidden beneath his skin. These pictures were in black and white and as

such there is no way to be put off by the obvious gore of the photo. But there was something about the calm and distinguished manner in which the young man posed for the photo that I found deeply disturbing. I remember that night as I spoke to my mother, who was fascinated by the description I gave of the photo and what the class was about, repeatedly asking, "Why would anyone want to do that?" I had seen people with safety pins stuck through their cheeks and ears, people with full body tattoos, but never had I seen someone with their face willingly peeled open.

Thinking back on this moment now, with the benefit of time and increased exposure to university education I understand that the purpose of showing these pictures was to use the atypicalness of the photo to provoke in students the reaction I outlined above. Objectively speaking what the young man in the photo did to his body had absolutely nothing to do with my subject position; he lived in New York City, he was part of a group of people who used body manipulation to express themselves and was presumably content with doing these things. Despite this understanding and until this very day I am unable to contemplate why he would want to engage in such behavior. In Lacanian terms it would seem that this photo induced one of my defense mechanisms, the Other was addressing my subjectivity in such I way that I was unable to respond intellectually. By remaining on the level of the physical appearance of the man in the photo, I was able to avoid recognizing the social circumstances that contribute to making this form of behavior the only recognition afforded certain people. In other words, my understanding of the photo was trapped at the level of a gut reaction. As such I was left unchallenged in the safe confines of my privileged social position within North American society.

Unlike Professor X, however, Professor Y had different ultimate goals for his classes that led to an alteration of some of the potential consequences for challenging students' preconceptions. He did want to challenge what students believed about human nature, as he felt most students were naïve, he also wanted them to be uncomfortable with their assumptions about the inherent goodness of people. But Professor Y's real goal for students was for them to begin to question some of the power structures with which they were surrounded, including, for example, the government or the university. However, when questioning these power relations it becomes very easy to place oneself outside of the equation. For instance, when examining the aftermath of the Federal sponsorship scandal and the role various government officials played in it, it becomes very comfortable to criticize their conduct without questioning one's individual role within an apathetic populace. In this way it turns into someone else's problem as I am simply a spectator objectively assessing the information provided to me. As a student within this class I had nothing personal invested in the material being examined. I could leave the class feeling that my eyes had been opened to the injustices without any compulsion for reflection on my role as a party to these injustices. This is not to suggest that the knowledge gained was not valuable, or that it should not have been addressed, but there was no impetus to act.

Professor Y also spoke of limits to the subject matter he used to challenge students. He felt that he had to be constantly aware of the experiences of students in his class, for example when discussing aspects of deviance he was always cognizant that students in the class might have experience in their family with things like violent crime. In so doing he avoided situations when students could begin to question some of their deeply held assumptions about crime and victimization, thereby bypassing situations like the abortion panel which occurred

in Professor X's class. Again this allows students to fix their thinking on an intellectual plane; taking in the information given to them by the professor and maintaining an artificial divide between the learning that takes place in the classroom and their subjectivity.

With respect to Lacanian analysis and the "discourse of the university" the care Professor Y takes in being attuned to students experiences with things like violent crime can be connected to the objet petit a. As described in the previous chapter this small letter in the "discourse of the university" not only represents the student, but their excesses, or experiences from other symbolic orders they bring with them to the symbolic order of the university. Professor Y seems to recognize that students do not come into his classroom as empty vessels and by fixing student thinking on an intellectual plane he hopes to stave off situations like the one from Professor X's class. Moreover, Professor Y may even suggest that situations like the one that occurred in Professor X's class should be disallowed because the affect elicited by the integration of students' excesses into the classroom counteracts his goal of questioning power structures external to him and students. Therefore, it would seem that Professor Y's version of harming/challenging students' naïve understandings of power structures is quite distinct from the harm to which Professor X was referring. In fact it seems that he makes every effort to avoid the kind of harm to which students might be exposed in Professor X's class.

The third professor (Professor Z) took yet a different point of view on harm in the context of teaching in the university classroom. In his view, harm in any form was something to be avoided as it would get in the way of both his teaching and the learning that he wanted students to accomplish. Furthermore, his goal was to "inoculate students against intellectual combatants", which meant providing them with the tools to defend against the displacement

of the complex structure of his material with simplistic arguments. From my own perspective as a student in the class, this "inoculation" was administered first in how the material was presented to the students, as the professor worked intensively to ensure that each new topic in the class built upon the last providing students with a feeling of progression and structure. That structure could then be applied by the student in formulating an argument for a paper or a class debate. Second, students were insulated from contrary arguments via the dynamics of the class as the professor made every effort to ensure that all students felt comfortable enough to speak. In so doing, Professor Z would be able to identify those students who may not understand the material in the way in which he intended in order to help them "rethink" their opposing ideas. More importantly, through the initiation of the "rethinking" process the professor was in fact demonstrating to students how they might apply his tools to "ward off future combatants". In the vision of Professor Z these tools had an important function in socializing students as future scholars of the academy, placing them in situations where they are forced to ward off the exact kind of combatants he was preparing them for.

As I recall Professor Z would lecture from week to week on the class material, but it was not until he was able to reorient a student's thinking, using the tools he was advocating, that we as students could see the value in what he was talking about. As outlined in the literature review on Lacanian subjectivity, through the example of the car, there is no way to pin down a master signifier (Professor Z's tool kit) with a few terms or a thorough explanation. Instead meaning is retroactively fixed in moments when the tools were demonstrated to students, not because the material was too theoretical or that students needed a better example, but the very idea of this solidification of understanding is virtually

impossible prior to this moment. In this way the master signifier gains its power as students see its ability to assimilate all manner of thinking into its symbolic order.

Professor Z also worked hard to leave ideas hanging at the end of each class, ideas that "pick away", which psychoanalytically speaking were ideas that ate away at students' closely guarded beliefs without piercing through the veil between fantasies and the Real. By not providing all answers Professor Z hoped to create a sense of intrigue which would lead to a greater retention of the class material. In an effort to inspire this intrigue he was unafraid to tackle potentially controversial topics such as pedophilia. These topics were approached in a very particular way, however, because, unlike Professor X's class for example, he said he did not want to "become the controversy", did not want to create discomfort. In an effort to accomplish this goal Professor Z presented the material in an incredibly scientific manner, which carries with it legitimacy that I think most students would not be willing to question openly. Through the removal of subjectivity from the topic he was able to look objectively at what might create this discomfort so that people would have a sense of where the discussion could lead without actually going there. As a student it seemed to me that controversial subject matter was always presented in such a way that students would not be invited and thus not allowed to dispute it. He created distance between students and subject matter to leave no space for the reintroduction of the excess on the part of the student. As a result, from my perspective as a student, the relinquishing of my previous/outside understandings of topics like pedophilia was not as drastic as they seemed to be in other classes.

In general, I remember this class feeling very benign. As students we worked hard to accomplish the tasks that were required, but we were safe: safe from the class material, safe from outside points of view on the subject matter and safe from the rest of the university. At

the time it felt as if all of the students were on the same page; everyone seemed to be in agreement with what was being said by the professor, or if they were not they did not express their objections suspending disbelief in order to guard the atmosphere created in the classroom. Students were even safe from any self inflicted discomfort they may have experienced. I recall in one class in particular when the Professor asked all of the students to stand from their chairs to perform a small exercise. Standing the chairs squawked across the smooth tiled floor and people attempted to straighten their clothes suddenly aware that they were no longer covered by the desks. Presently, I do not remember the exact pretense of the exercise, but I seem to think that it had something to do with our level of concern about what other people thought of our actions. Professor Z began asking questions, if we felt that we could answer yes we were allowed to continue to stand, but if we could not we were to sit down. This exercise went on for about five minutes until there were approximately five of us left standing. Prior to this moment I had simply been listening to what the professor was saying and answering as best as I could, but suddenly I became very aware of the students who were already seated. Whether imaginary or not I could feel eyes boring into my back (as I sat close to the front of the class) and I felt very uncomfortable with the spectacle I was making of myself. With palms sweating and heart racing I took the opportunity to sit after the professor asked the next question feeling instantly better, but at the same time foolish. When I sat down I turned in my chair to verify that in fact everyone was staring at me, but it was to my great surprise that this was not the case at all. Some students were still paying attention to what the professor was saying but, others were playing with their notes and still others were staring off into space waiting for the lecture to begin again. I turned forward in my desk feeling incredibly stupid and wanting desperately to stand again and prove to the professor

and myself that I was not one to care about what other people thought of my actions. At last I was given my chance and stood again as the professor gave those of us who had sat down the opportunity to stand and be counted among those who were "different".

That day I was allowed to walk out of the class feeling that I was unique in comparison to the other students who had chosen to sit down and remain seated. I didn't need to question the fact that I had chosen to sit down in the first place, that thoughts of other students looking at me made me feel as if I needed to sit down or that I needed to prove something to the professor and be able to stand again and be counted among those who had not chosen to sit down at all. Psychoanalytic speaking, I was able to retain my ego-ideal, or that version of myself in which I appear as being likable and unique in comparison to the other students in the class. As with Professor Y's class this exercise had evoked in me a defense mechanism. Through the act of sitting down I had jeopardized my ego-ideal; however, I was allowed to regain that fantasy feeling that I was special and unique. By providing me with the opportunity to stand again Professor Z effectively solidified the value of the course content being exemplified in the exercise and increased the power of that particular master signifier.

Each of the three professors discussed here had very different responses and ideas surrounding the topic of harm in the classroom. In many ways Professor X could be said to have actively created situations in which events could transpire in the way they did in my class. This was accomplished through the choice of class topics as they were often highly publicized and served to polarize the general population. In so doing Professor X hoped to expand the students' vision of themselves. However, he also recognized the potential for danger to students as the expansion of subject-hood meant its simultaneous destabilization, a process for which some students might not be prepared. Professor Y also recognized harm as

being a part of the university classroom, but for him it was not a consequence he actively pursued. Contrarily, he worked to be cognizant of the students in his class and their personal experiences with potentially sensitive topics, to ensure that his presentation did not cross the line he created between challenging the students' preconceptions and actually harming them. As such there was no connection made between the class material and the students' subjectivity. Finally, harm, for Professor Z, was something to be avoided in his classes. For this professor harm got in the way of the teaching he was doing and opted instead to provide students with tools they could use to ward off potential threats to the course material being presented in his class. Therefore, when examining the three professors together there seems to be no doubt that each recognized that harm could exist in the classroom. However, after examining carefully each of their descriptions it became clear that I still did not have an answer to the question of what harm was.

What is Harm?

After being presented with three approaches to the issue of harm in the classroom, I was left to find some unifying thread. Upon a careful investigation of the professors' different views on harm one idea came to mind: Harm is the result of some other action. In this case I would suggest the action is thinking. That is through the act of asking a person to think you may in fact be entreating a process that has the potential to cause them harm. By this statement I do not mean the kind of thinking that you may engage in while deciding what meal to order at a restaurant or attempting to think through a crossword puzzle clue. The thinking being referred to here demands action from the subject as conscious links are forged between the symbolic, imaginary and the Real (Bracher, 2006). This thinking makes it impossible for subjects to "maintain their sense of themselves as intelligent, responsible,

moral beings while doing nothing about the terrible human suffering and injustice" that surrounds them (Bracher, 2006, p.55). It opens up possibilities that make staying in your previous subject position untenable, this thinking takes something of integral importance away from how the subject used to visualize their identity and leaves them wanting. This is not to suggest that other forms of thinking are not as important as the one I am articulating here, but the consequences for not knowing the right word for the crossword puzzle clue are not the same as those for failing to reassemble ones sense of self after a fantasy has been discredited.

Student Reflections

With this conceptual clarification of harm, a reexamination of the student interviews became possible because while students generally felt that they had not been "harmed" they provided instances of being forced to think. At the time I defined harm in two ways, the first was in relation to subject matter they were presented in the class. More specifically I made reference to the Holocaust of European Jewry as being difficult for some students given the magnitude of the terrors inflicted upon the people sent to the concentration camps. I then described the harm created by the "thinking" articulated by the professors. In this case the example I provided the students, as a way of making concrete the notions I was attempting to get at, had to do with a contradiction within the student between a previous moral belief and an alternative way of thinking presented by the professor. Below is an excerpt from the interview with S10 which illustrates one of my attempts to raise the topic of harm. This is followed by her attempt to address the topic:

M: This next question comes from a project that I worked on with some professors as an undergraduate where I interviewed them about the same kinds of things that I am

talking to you about and asked them about their attitudes towards teaching, learning, etc and this question comes from stuff that they were telling me. It wasn't a question that I ever asked them explicitly but this was stuff that they were talking about to me and it has to do with the issue of harm. Now obviously this is not a physical harm, but this is kind of intellectual harm and there are two kinds of instances or examples that they often gave me and the first one has to do with subject matter. The example I'll give to you is looking at Holocaust material or something like that, valuable to look at, but not pleasant to go through or anything like that. The other one has to do with having something that the student feels is core to who they are, kind of that little ball inside you that says this is who I am and this is what I believe, and having that contradicted in some way, shape or form. So I've been giving the example and this might not be the case obviously for everybody but, like somebody whose religious beliefs are challenged by a particular class wherein they think you know what maybe I'm not quite, I don't quite have it, this may not be the thing for me or something like that. Have you ever had an experience similar to that at all?

S10: No not like that, no actually no, I would say the most harm I've ever been done is the profs who are very knowledgeable and they think everybody else is just going to get it like this (*snaps her finger*) like they almost don't explain things well enough or they think that you'll just get it or if they mention something once that you're going to remember it kind of thing. So I would say that might be more harmful than anything that I've been challenged with personally.

M: Do you think that professors should be worried about that kind of harm that I just talked about?

S10: Oh yeah

M: What would you do in a situation where you were a professor let's say somewhere down the road and you had to present some material you thought was very valid that needed to be talked about, but was difficult, how would you go about presenting it?

S10: I think that I would before presenting it, say this may be offensive to some of you, and I understand that and I don't want to offend any of you, but I feel this is valuable to teach it and it might not reflect what even I think, what everybody else thinks. Well one of my friends he said that in his bio 107 class his prof talked about how the earth came to be and…

M: Oh?

S10: I would have had a ("*problem*"?) with that probably so I'm glad that never happened to me, cause I think that would be; I think it would be hard… I think that's it's hard to satisfy everybody when you are teaching, and people are going to say what they are going to say whether they think it's offensive or not, but I think if you were a prof and you just came and said this is what I think and that's whatever, I think you could definitely harm students that way.

M: Do you think of a situation that you could be in specifically where something somebody said could make you feel offended by what they were talking about?

S10: I think probably anything religiously or yeah

M: What would you do?

S10: I would (*pause*), I think it would depend on the prof whether they seemed open to it or whether they seemed like if when you did go talk to them and that would affect

your mark even more kind of thing, you might just have to suck it up and try not to get the prof.

From student to student the format of the question changed slightly as I attempted to ask it in such a way that students would easily understand what it was that I was attempting to elicit. As evidenced from the preceding interview passage at times it took a great deal of coaxing before students would discuss more specifically the harm to which I was referring.

Overall I received a variety of responses from an unequivocal "no!" to a yes; however, most students consciously couched their answers in the direction of not having felt harmed in the classroom. Interestingly, looking more closely at the language (unconscious in nature) used by students their initial assertion that they had not been harmed begins to falter through the use of phrases like "I don't think I felt harmed" and "not necessarily". Even the students who began with an authoritative "No" often softened slightly in the next breath with "I don't think so…" This may indicate a gap in their thinking as chances are high that, like me, they had never thought to associate being harmed with what they were experiencing in the classroom, while being placed in situations where the thinking outlined earlier could have been happening. Below I look more closely at several of the student responses to this question in an effort to bring to light the potential differences between the students' experiences and subsequent rationalizations surrounding the time they have spent in the classroom. In so doing the remainder of the chapter will open a space from which we may begin to rethink classroom experiences as being highly charged psychic environments and not benign learning situations for students.

I begin this examination of student experiences with harm with another visit to the story of the alternative headache remedy as told by S2 outlined in detail in Chapter 4. During one

of his classes in the U.K. a classmate of S2 was suffering from a headache, but was unable to take Tylenol. Therefore, the professor of the class performed a thought exercise on the student and was able to cure the headache. In the course of discussing the incident S2 concluded that "education should make you a little uncomfortable with where you are", suggesting from the tone of his voice that this was a positive consequence of the teaching and learning in which he was interested.

During a conversation I had with S3 specifically about the issue of harm she told me about a theoretical perspective, introduced during one of her classes, which had made her feel uneasy. In describing this sensation she said:

> It's a little uncomfortable to think that all of your goodness or decisions that you make...are actually not really under your control... and everything that you thought you knew...[was] sort of pushed towards physiology and neurology and I just thought well that just pretty much reduces us to biology and that was a little disturbing.

Obviously these students take very disparate views on the issue of exposure to alternative ways of thinking, but interestingly they both used the same phraseology when describing it. S2 said that education ought to make you feel "a little uncomfortable", but was very excited about the potential this discomfort had for his learning. S3, while using the same three words as S2, does not have the same feeling about her experience, instead describing it as "disturbing". Therefore, I am left with a question; can one student's discomfort be equated with that of another's? Can my discomfort be equated to that of the student sitting with me in a class discussing health and illness, a student whose father was diagnosed with terminal cancer and who recently told her family that he is considering self termination? Or to that of the student struggling with an eating disorder sitting with me in a class speaking of the

flawed body perceptions of those who are suffering from anorexia? I think the answer to these questions is "no", but if the measure of "a little discomfort" is markedly different from student to student how then might it be dealt with in the classroom?

For now I want to leave that question and move through some of the other student's views. S1 said, "Me myself I like it slap, slap it in my face, give me images give me movies give me whatever, tell me what happened…When I say hit me with the images I guess I don't mean to see something be actually dying on the screen." This student, it would seem, was driven by a sense of voyeurism, he needs, and wants to know what happened and by his repeated references to images or imagery he wants, more importantly, to see what happened. But this seeing has a limit as he says that he does not "mean to see something be actually dying on the screen."

Psychoanalytically speaking for this student it seems seeing "something" die in front of him would be an invasion of the Real, that bit of our unconscious existence that can not be comprehended for fear of being exposed to some aspect of ourselves we could not consolidate with our conscious self understanding. This is not to suggest, for a moment, that this student is a murderer awaiting the opportunity to come out, as his discomfort with the image of death could simply come from the North American taboo placed on the subject. Most people are fascinated by the notion of death, that moment when life ceases, when circulation stops and our souls, however one might like to consider that word, depart. Simultaneously, we are terrified by death and the idea that our bodies will weaken and begin the slow process of decay. According to Lacan the notion of "death" is the essence of the symbolic order, "because the symbol, by standing in place of the thing which it symbolizes, is equivalent to the death of the thing" (Evans, 2001, p. 31) that is the thing has no existence

outside of its symbolization. The lack of existence can also be extended to the human subject who is nothing more than a chain of symbols thereby being forced to come "up against the fact that he may disappear from the chain of what he is" (Evans, 2001, p. 31). As such the topic and the ideas surrounding it are relegated to that which is unspoken, that which should never be uttered. With this prohibition in place people are left to fulfill their need for death through what might seem like obsession with the careful observation of accident scenes and news reports about of violent crime. Therefore, S1's distaste for the image of death is not based upon seeing someone die per say, but on the consequences this subject matter has for his own identity. Witnessing the death of a person on screen would inevitably cause this student to begin to think about not only those aspects of death that are intriguing and fascinating and shocking and horrific but also those aspects that are mundane. That is the end of subjectivity, the cessation of existence as this society has come to cherish it. This is, I submit, the thinking about death that this student would like to avoid.

Another example of some of the potential consequences of thinking can be seen in the response I was given by S5 when asked to discuss the issue of harm. She came from a class in which the students participated in weekly seminars whose subject matter depended on the topics covered during regular class time. During my interview with her, she related a story about a seminar wherein two of her fellow classmates divulged their secret battle with anorexia. According to S5 the women were very candid about their experiences with the disease; however the interviewee said that their confession silenced the other students, instead of furthering the conversation. It seemed that the other students felt that there was nothing they could say to compete with the fact that these young women had suffered through this disease. Their confession also had an unforeseen effect on S5. When speaking

about her experience in this particular seminar she said, "I don't know, it mostly makes me, not worried, but it just makes you kind of think about how easy it could be to fall into that for anybody, even cause you never expect to when you start that kind of thing. You wonder how fragile everybody really is".

In this moment S5's classmates had, unintentionally, forced her to think the "unthinkable". Their stories had opened a space in that classroom into which S5 was able to imaginatively place herself. In so doing she began to see how she could find herself in their position. Unfortunately, there is something lost in the transcription of our conversation, but I remember thinking at the time of the interview, and making a note of it, that the student seemed incredibly uncomfortable with the thought that *anybody* could "fall" into this disease. As the male and female students from Professor X's class discovered through each others discussion of abortion, S5 saw the Other side of female existence, wherein women fight for power and recognition by trying to make themselves physically disappear. Through this experience she feels vulnerable to anorexia, a condition that had not previously existed as a personal threat. In this instance harm can begin to play a significant role as this student's subjectivity was altered through the experience she had with the two students suffering from anorexia. Her fantasy, that she was untouchable by such hardships, had been exposed leaving her unable to go back to her previous thinking.

The next student took a very different approach to the question of harm. S12 was in her second year of university, planning to do an honors degree in psychology, followed by graduate studies. When I asked her about harm in the classroom she replied:

> I don't know, I think like the harm that I would be worried about the most for students is like killing that material. Like personally I loved bio in high school, loved it so much,

I came here and I was like I am going to be a Bio Sci major and then my first two bio classes just killed the material, like I hate bio now…

This student was very thoughtful and seemed to give a great deal of consideration to all of the questions I asked, speaking extensively about how much she appreciated the self directed learning she was able to engage in at the University. So keeping these comments in mind I wondered how it might be that biology, a subject she claimed to have loved could have been "killed". Having taken biology in high school and speaking with other students who have taken introductory biology classes in university I can say that the subject matter changes very little from secondary to post-secondary classes. As such it must have been the presentation of the subject matter which had been altered, indicating perhaps that this student had depended on the teacher for her enjoyment of the class. Can it then be said that the student loved biology or did she in fact love the high school biology teacher?

From a psychoanalytic perspective this reference is not to romantic love, but the kind of love that is generated for the "subject who is supposed to know" (Evans, 2001, p. 212). In this case the student's high school biology teacher became the subject in whom the student saw all of the knowledge she was seeking, and as such became the object of her transference.[39] She sought to master the material in order to demonstrate her devotion to the teacher and in the process convinced herself of her passion for biology. By creating this love of the teacher's biology she was avoiding thinking, since she merely mimicked the ideas presented to her by the teacher. Simultaneously, her high school biology teacher likely encouraged her passion thus enacting their own countertransferential[40] tendencies. Within

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[39] Transference is "the attribution of knowledge to the Other, the supposition that the Other is a subject who knows" (Evans, 2001, p. 212).

[40] Countertransference can be understood as "the sum of prejudices, passions, perplexities and even the insufficient information of the analyst at a certain moment of the dialectical process of the treatment" (Evans, 2001, p. 29).

this student the teacher saw the epitome of their success in teaching biology. It would seem to be the unconscious desire of teachers confined within the "discourse of the master" to have their students reproduce the subject matter in the exact manner in which they have come to understand it, thereby justifying the time and effort spent in its mastery. Through this action students allow their teachers to "acclaim the *mastery* of [their] knowledge and the *force* of [their] argument, being *dominant* in [their] field and having *control* over [their] material" (Aoki, 2002, p. 33). While it might be said that the student was in love with the teacher, the teacher also came to be in love with the student and in so doing perpetuated the student's aversion to thinking. Admittedly, given the paucity of information offered by S12, the interpretation remains speculative but, to continue the interpretive logic, if S12's high school teacher had enabled the student to think her way through the biology class the teacher may have been forced to rethink her own understanding of biology as the student challenged the knowledge she/he held.

Unfortunately, for the student this relationship was drastically transformed upon her entry into university. Whether it is as a result of her experiences with biology in high school or the lack of "knowledge" embodied in her new teacher she was unable to enact the same passion for biology in her university classes. Subsequently, she found a new passion in psychology, thereby reinserting herself into the "discourse of the university", giving up part of her excess, and avoiding new pitfalls in the "discourse of the hysteric"[41], characterized by the subject's inability to find a satisfactory master signifier to help formulate their behavior.

Final comments on this topic come from S8 who discussed a religion class he was taking, in which the class was shown a film called *Life is Beautiful* (1997). In this movie the

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[41] The discourse of the hysteric (Evans, 2001, p. 45) $\frac{\$}{a}$ $\frac{S_1}{S_2}$

main character played by Roberto Benigni and his son, played by Giorgio Cantarini, were sent to a concentration camp from their home in Italy during the Second World War. Benigni immediately recognized the immanent danger he and his son were in, but uses humor and game play to protect the child from the horrors surrounding them in the camp. S8 questioned the validity of this story line asking whether or not it was acceptable to focus upon the relationship between the father and his son instead of "actually focusing on what was really going on at the time". For this student there was something about the focus upon the father and the son that was unbearable to his understanding of the historical events in question.

Interestingly, it seemed he was giving this matter a great deal of consideration and concluded that despite his misgivings about the film itself and relating to my question about harm he stated, "sometimes you have to bring that out there, you have to have that conflict otherwise you lose the meaning." The film had in fact caused the student some degree of harm as it was a dilemma that he could not resolve satisfactorily, showing that he could not go back to his previous fantasy, leaving this event on the tip of his tongue ready for rehashing. Despite his inability to conclude this issue for himself, I would suggest he was not unhappy that he had to think about it further; in fact he seemed to appreciate the need for some ambiguities in thinking, which he felt, would prevent the loss of meaning and increase its richness. As such this student did not fear thinking, but embraced it recognizing what Professor X felt was the utility in having students' foundations questioned in the hope of demonstrating to them the fantasy they had mistaken as "reality"[42].

When I initially posed the question of how harm could be dealt with in the classroom it seemed of the utmost importance that I was able to answer it somehow by the end of this

[42] Based on Lacanian psychoanalysis the term "reality" can be interpreted as being akin to another master signifier that can never be pinned down with a final or concrete definition.

chapter. Dealing with harm in an effective manner through its minimization or removal was my intention. As I continued writing this chapter from that point and through subsequent revisions I have come to realize that any attempt to eliminate or minimize harm would be futile. The students with whom I spoke, for the most part had never before thought about the time they spent in the classroom as being potentially harmful, and even fewer of those who had something specific to say about harm recognized its nature as what I identified as a consequence of some other action, in this case thinking. Therefore, I am left feeling impotent. Throughout this chapter I have outlined some of the consequences for shaking students' subjectivity and opening up that space between their previous fantasies and where thinking has led them. For some students this experience was welcomed (S2) and for others it was frightening (S5). But I am left in much the same position as Professor X, torn between feeling that this process of questioning students' subject positions is important, and through the recognition of the consequences of this action I see its dangers. I also wonder if the approach taken by Professor Y is more appropriate considering professors are not formally trained in how to deal with the consequences of harm to students.

As shown by some of the student comments regarding this issue the potential for harming students exists in all classes, whether or not the professor encourages the kind of situation seen in Professor X's classroom. Harm then is something integral to the existence of the university (and perhaps other social structures), we can not rid ourselves of it, but it can not be ignored either. I would suggest that in fact it is needed. If it can be assumed that this is the case I would posit first that there needs to be an open recognition that thinking and harm happen in the classroom. With this in place it then becomes possible for classroom interactions to be rethought. Similar to the "inoculation" advocated by Professor Z, students

must be given tools they can use to rebuild their subjectivity once their fantasy has been deconstructed. The eventual formation of these tools is difficult to imagine at this time, but the "discourse of the analyst"[43] may present one possibility. As mentioned previously the appealing factor of this discourse is that it functions to prevent a master signifier from being imposed upon the subject. Therefore, the subject must consciously create their own master signifiers. However, before further steps are taken in the direction of posing a solution to harm in the classroom more work with harm how it functions and the real impact it has on students and professors is needed.

[43] The discourse of the analyst (Evans, 2001, p. 45) $\frac{a}{S_2} \quad \frac{\$}{S_1}$

Chapter 6

Conclusion

In the final chapter I conclude with reflections on the research journey undertaken for the thesis project. I offer reflection on the research questions that guided the research, the methodological approach taken and limitations as well as contributions of the study. Based on the work completed, I then make recommendations for future research.

Reflections on Overall Project

The research project was guided by my desire to understand how undergraduate students talk about and make sense of their university experience while registered at the University of Alberta. I was not interested in learning about their extra-curricular activities such as participation in sports, student governance or residential life. My questions focused specifically on teaching and learning. I wanted to learn how they used language to render and communicate an understanding of teaching and learning. Second, I was curious whether, as some of the literature suggested, students have adopted meanings reflecting a discourse of consumerism. Third, having been exposed to the idea of harm by the three professors interviewed, I was also interested to learn if students shared the notion of teaching and learning as potentially harmful.

Looking back at the literature reviewed, it was important to establish a general lack of consideration for the actual voice of undergraduate students. Nonetheless, the literature provided sensitizing concepts for example, the idea contained in the institutional research of the professor-student relationship conceived as an economic exchange or the notions of power, resistance and knowledge as formulated by theorists taking a critical pedagogical approach. These sensitizing concepts served as a constant reminder to remain open to the

possibility of multiple interpretations, an orientation especially important for a truly exploratory study.

When considering the interpretations made from the student narratives I was surprised that often what the students said about teaching and learning did not connect with the attributions made in some of the literature reviewed for this work. In fact only S7 came close to reflecting a consumer orientation, but even her story was not a perfect reflection of this attitude. I was also surprised that some students were actively engaged in learning; some, like S2 hoped to participate in knowledge testing with all of his senses; in contrast, S8 emphasized cognitive activity that involved conceptual synthesis, or "making connections" in and out of the classroom. Students also seemed to have given the topics raised during the interview some consideration prior to the interview as their responses were always thoughtful and communicated with great consideration. Some students hinted at the influence of structures beyond the classroom. S4, for example, spoke of disciplinary communities that were responsible for creating and monitoring the standards appropriate for different subject areas. Reference to class size and anonymity within the classroom hints at the bureaucracy that resides beyond yet shapes and restricts what is possible within the classroom. Based on the concept resistance (Feldman, 1997) I was sensitized to expect evidence of resistance. Perhaps the inability of S2 to find his groove at the U of A could be read as resistance. The persistence of S7 to elicit from her professor the right answer may also be read as resistance although in the example given; the story ends with acquiescence as she silently withdrew. But, perhaps the withdrawal could be read as itself a form of resistance. With respect to the topic of harm I was able to determine that despite the fact most of the students said immediately that they had not encountered harm in the classroom by the end of our

discussion this initial tone had often changed. This was perhaps best exemplified by S5 who told the story of the students from her class who revealed that they had suffered from the disease, causing her to rethink a disease that she had never before considered in relation to herself.

Reflections on Method and Theory:

The formulation of the research questions made the adoption of a constructivist approach a requirement for researching the symbolic order. I accepted, for the purpose of answering the questions posed, the assumption that students are social actors and as such they actively create or construct an inter-subjectively meaningful existence. I also assumed that, as a former undergraduate student who participated in the student culture of the University of Alberta that it was possible for me to have a meaningful dialogue with the students who volunteered. However imprecise the process of meaning construction and communication may be, we are as social and cultural actors able to carry on meaningful conversations in ordinary daily life and I assumed this capacity for shared meaning would hold in a somewhat more artificial situation such as the conversational interview.

The constructivist assumptions recommend caution in claiming too much for what is learned using the constructivist approach. After many re-readings of the transcribed interviews – the texts - looking for both the particular and the whole of the students' narrative it became clear that students too were artfully constructing a story to relate to me, the researcher, about their experience with teaching, learning and harm in the university. This became apparent when more closely examining the students' usage of metaphor as a means to make coherent their overall vision of their experiences with teaching and learning. It was also clear that as I moved from reading the transcripts to searching – highlighting, selecting,

excluding- certain aspects to re-present "the" story that I too was involved in artful construction. I attempted to be faithful to the original words and to re-tell the story as I believed it was communicated. I recognize, in retrospect, that I would be in a stronger position to claim that the re-told story is the one or a close approximation to the one the student speaker wished to communicate if I had, in a second interview, shared my re-telling with the original speaker. This would have provided some indication that the first order interpretation did not take too much license. Without this step, the quality of the re-telling can only be judged by the reader: a determination that sufficient care was taken to give the reader a sense that the re-telling suggests a semblance of authenticity[44]. There is no guarantee that a student would not say, as Borland's (2004) grandmother stated after reading her reconstruction: this is your story not mine.

When I began the process of analyzing the interview material I had a focus on students' specific answers to particular questions, as it was my intention to simply report on what the students had said during the interviews. However, after many re-readings and careful consideration of my overall intention for the project, it became obvious that this approach missed something. This question-answer format of summarizing what was said caused a fragmentation of the student interviews creating a situation in which, again, the student voice was lost. Instead of the students being given the space in which to express their thoughts and feelings about their experience with teaching and learning it became my recitation of their words. As such, it was necessary to turn toward a more constructionist approach that retains the unity of the students' perspective. By formulating the students' interviews into a story about their experiences with respect to teaching and learning, details about the students past

[44] By utilizing the phrase "semblance of authenticity" I side-step the larger issue of whether or not the truth or authenticity of experience can be determined.

experiences and characteristics could be included as these contextual contingencies often impacted greatly how the student came to make sense of more recent events in their university careers. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than with S2 and his past experiences with education in the U.K. In this way the students' stories were filled out allowing for more of their voices to reach the reader and potentially creating a more complete set of data from which subsequent interpretations might be made.

This approach to the interview material from the students also preserved complexity of the interactions that occur within the university when teaching and learning are taking place. The relationship fostered between students and professor is incredibly complex. They negotiate with each other in an effort to determine the best way to accomplish the ultimate goal of having students learn. However, there are a great many intervening factors in the form of previous experiences and expectations from both the student and professor that can interfere with the learning they desire to take place, as was exemplified in S7's frustration over not getting the "right" answers from her math professor. As such it would have been inappropriate and not representative of students' experiences to make any effort to gloss over the complexity of this particular interaction.

Generally, the creation of the student interviews into narratives was, I believe enlightening. What was told to me in the interview about teaching and learning had coherence. The narrative form preserved the internal organization, and thus the coherence, of the meaning pattern. The interpretive method I preferred was, I believe, more faithful to the interview dialogue and by keeping the unity of each story, it allowed for the identification of four different approaches to teaching and learning. These were labeled: inspirational/experiential, master/apprentice, humanist/contemplative, and

credentialing/consumerist. It was by preserving the story as a whole, and the act of comparison across narratives that provided the conditions for suggesting a low level of generality. The comparison of narratives enabled the identification of the students' active stance in classroom relations. The creation of the narratives and the subsequent ability to examine them in a side-by-side fashion also enabled the identification of students' disappointment with their experiences and the reverence that in general they possessed for the professor as teacher.

Narrative construction produces "findings" that are lengthy and descriptive. In the service of economy, without loss of complexity, I felt compelled to choose a subset of the twelve student narratives for inclusion in the written thesis. After careful consideration it was determined that the interviews of the four students discussed in Chapter 4 contained within them the richest and best quality information. However, I was concerned about the exclusion of the stories of the remaining eight students. I undertook a careful re-examination of all twelve interviews to ensure that the patterns of the four selected narratives covered, generally speaking, the concerns and topics discussed by the other eight. I concluded that although the stories of the other eight were uniquely presented, the four selected captured the diversity of patterning with respect to the position of student, professor-student relation, the authority of the professor as legitimate. If five or more student narratives had been selected, each one over the four selected would have greatly increased the redundancy

As mentioned in the methodology chapter with respect to the work of Hollway and Jefferson (1997) my inability to perform two interviews with students limited the breadth and depth of stories I was able to construct from the students' interviews. This is not to suggest, however, that the interpretations I was able to make from the material as I have presented it

are not valuable. Rather, a follow-up interview would have increased the potential to obtain more information on what remained as "hidden" meaning. Other, perhaps more nuanced observations could have been made if there was more discursive attention to selective topics.

The sensitization to the unconscious and its efforts to conceal students' true desires and the contention that the professor is the "subject supposed to know" proved to be vital to my ability to identify another layer of meaning from the narratives. Without this sensitization I would not have been able to identify and discuss students' disappointments with the lack of congruency between their previous expectations and their actual experiences with university. Moreover, the students identification of the professor as the subject from whom they would be able to gain the knowledge they needed to regain some portion of their subjectivity would also have been lost. In this way the integration of some of Lacan's theoretical treatises proved highly valuable in making connections between the seemingly distinct student narratives.

However, as a result of my inability to perform two interviews with the students the interpretation using the Lacanian concepts was only able to scratch the surface of what I think is possible when using this approach. Had there been two interviews not only would I have had more data from which to base my interpretations, but I would also have been afforded the opportunity to analyze the first interview looking for the kinds of inconsistencies identified in this work and returned to the students with further questions. In so doing the students would have had the chance to attempt to clarify their previous thoughts by adding greater detail to what they were articulating.

My position as a student when approaching the undergraduates with questions of teaching and learning was an advantage in a number of ways including the fact that I could

be considered by students as being part of the undergraduate culture first, rather than a only a researcher. Second, because I was a very recent graduate student, my undergraduate student experiences were fresh in my mind making it easier to relate to the students who participated in the interview. Third as a result of the fact that the students who participated were recruited from classes I had taken I was able to bypass questions used to familiarize myself with that particular class environment. My connection to these students as a former undergraduate student also meant that I was able to integrate some autobiographical experiences into the interpretations of the interview material. This proved to be particularly important in the harm chapter as my remembrances served to make more concrete a topic that in my own experience had never been related to the classroom. However, this position as a student might also have had a number of drawbacks because of the assumptions I could make from my position as a student. As a result of these assumptions I might not have asked students questions that a researcher with a different background might have asked, meaning that the possibility exists that a variety of other avenues of investigation might be undertaken.

Contribution:

The particular attention paid to the voice of students and the subjective positioning that voice implies has allowed for a number of important contributions. The first relates to the four patterns interpreted from the students' speech, which provide the opportunity to deepen a discussion about the university classroom. As a result of the fact that these patterns were developed from actual University of Alberta students the possibility exits that parts of these patterns could be used to better understand the positions of other undergraduate students in the university. In so doing a more complex and potentially more complete vision of students' interactions with teaching, learning, knowledge and power may be offered. Additionally,

these interpretations allowed for the discovery of each of the four students' acknowledgment of the professor as the "subject supposed to know", their apparent sense of disappointment with their experience, as well as their more active role in knowledge acquisition. All of these realizations function to broaden the comprehension of students' understandings of teaching and learning in the university classroom. The detail provided and the inconsistencies included provide information that aids in problematizing what may be described as a general complacency that all is as it should be, or could be in the university classroom.

Interestingly, the topic of harm, another contribution made by this work, was something that I had not anticipated tackling when I began to work with the three professors as an undergraduate student. Looking closely at the language students used hints of self-doubt began to appear in their initial denial of having felt harmed. There are a couple of possible reasons, as well as others perhaps not thought of, for this seeming shift in student thinking from not having been harmed to conceding the possibility of such an occurrence. To begin the topic of harm caused by thinking is one that is not generally connected to the classroom at any level of education. This could mean that even students who might have experienced or witnessed the kind of harm to which I was referring would not have a vocabulary they could use to talk about it. Second, harm is a subjective experience and students might have been confused by the descriptions I attached to the term. Alternatively, students may have acquiesced to please my perhaps obvious interest in this subject.

In the context of this project the connection of the student and parts of the professorial interviews to Lacanian psychoanalysis offered a potential explanation for several outstanding topics and provided another tool in the understanding of students' discussion of their experience in the university classroom. This included why students came to see the professor

as the "subject supposed to know", a way to begin to understand students' disappointments and the impact their excesses have on the learning in which they engage, as well as exploring the topic of harm. As such these topics, which could not be accounted for in the other interpretations provided throughout this work, because of their focus on only the words of students taken at face value, were discussed in detail.

Future Research:

In concluding this work there are several areas in which further inquiry would be beneficial. I believe more work needs to be done with the four student patterns. Could they be used to listen while interviewing other students, used to ask questions about where power resides, the nature of knowledge and the variations of inquiry possible with these answers? Moreover, what are the potential consequences of that understanding for the student, the professor and the effectiveness of teaching and learning within the university? By keeping these topics in mind students' perspectives on the experiences they have had within the university classroom would be more detailed. With this detail it would then be possible to examine more closely how changes in the university classroom could be made to benefit undergraduate student learning.

Harm is also an issue that requires greater consideration as the surface of this topic was only touched upon in this work. This examination could begin with further interviews of both professors and students exploring interpretations, such as the notion that thinking itself as a potential cause of harm, made from this work and asking participants to consider and discuss them. Additionally, observations could be made in the context of the classroom setting. This step in particular was one that seemed to be advocated by Bracher (2006) and Berman (1994) as it has the potential of getting at a topic not generally considered by students. As

demonstrated in Chapter 5 which is devoted to an examination of harm, having first hand knowledge of events and situations that occur within a class would allow the researcher greater access to the context of students' understandings. By acting as part of the student cohort the researcher would likely change the dynamics of any interviews such that students may be more, or less, willing to share ideas. In this way a topic that, based on the student interviews conducted for this thesis, was not one that they had before considered within the context of the classroom could be witnessed first hand by a researcher. This could then provide concrete examples that could be taken back to the students from that particular class for further discussion and clarification. As mentioned it would also be very important to arrange to interview students and professors at least twice.

Finally more work, generally, in collecting the thoughts of undergraduate students in their own words needs to be undertaken. As outlined in the literature review there has been much work done in areas such as the institution of the university, in survey work, narrative reflections of experience and in critical pedagogy, but the voice of the student tends to be mediated by other agendas and disciplinary interests. Students are the recipients of tremendous amounts of knowledge surrounding teaching and learning, however, little has been done to ask them directly how they learn best, where and how the most significant learning takes place and so forth. As exemplified by the students discussed in this thesis, they seem to have given their experience in the university classroom a great deal of thought and consideration and while they do not have answers to the concerns they are raising their thoughts deserve further study. Moreover, the complexity of the relationship between students, professors, teaching, learning, knowledge and power has only begun to be examined by this work. A more thorough study of the interpretations made herein may help

to provide alternative approaches for students and professors in the university classroom and potentially improve the teaching provided and the learning gained.

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Appendix 1

Questions for the students

Reference Questions:

1. What faculty are you in?
2. What is your major and minor?
3. What year are you in?
4. What do you plan to do after your degree?
5. Why did you choose sociology?

Interview Questions:

1. What do you think good teaching entails? (Please be specific giving examples) What do you think the best way of assessing it would be? (Do you feel that the teacher evaluations are useful?)
2. What do you think is the primary role of the professor within the university?
3. Do you feel that the university as an institution places a great deal of attention on teaching?
4. What characteristics must a professor have for you to feel they are competent?
5. What kind of teaching style do you like best? (i.e. Straight lecturing wherein you passively take in the information or seminar style where you must be actively involved in the classroom environment)
6. What do you feel to be the optimal class size?
7. What do you find is of more value to you as a student, a class wherein you learn a lot of facts about the sociology of the family for example or a class which gives you the tools to think critically about all aspects of the social world?
8. Upon entering a class what are your expectations of the professor's behavior and what you are going to take away from the class?
9. How do you see the role of a textbook in any class? As a resource who or what do you find more useful the professor or the textbook?
10. For you to consider a class to be "good" do you need to feel entertained?
11. Do you feel you have a responsibility upon entering any classroom?
12. Have you ever found yourself adjusting your way of thinking so that it is more in line with the thinking expressed by your professor? If you have, do you feel that this is good or bad and what are some of the consequences of that?
13. Give an example of the class you feel epitomizes your expectations of a university class.
14. Give an example of the worst experience you have had in a university classroom.
15. If I were to say give me a definition of "critical thinking" what would it be?
16. A lot of the professors I have spoken with about teaching and learning have expressed some concern around the notion of harming their students. What do you understand this term to mean? Have you ever felt harmed upon leaving a certain class?
17. Do you feel that your professors enjoy teaching? Why or why not?
18. How would you characterize your relationship to your professors and to knowledge generally?
19. What does learning mean to you?

Appendix 2

Questions for professors (a combination of questions from the first and second interviews)

1. What kind of preparation did this schooling provide for your entrance into the University classroom as a professor?
2. How did you develop your particular teaching style? Are there any particular theories of teaching and education that you prescribe to?
3. In you mind what is the role of the professor within the classroom?
4. What kind of classroom do you prefer, small intimate or large lecture halls?
5. Considering that preferences are not always met, does your approach to teaching change? And if so how does it?
6. What kind of responsibility do you feel you have to the students when entering a class?
7. How would you define what good teaching is, and what in your mind would be the best way of assessing it?
8. What specifically makes good academic material?
9. What could some of the consequences be of the statement referring to the inoculation of your students?
10. Where did your experience that you draw on for teaching come from, ex. Past professors, colleagues etc? And how could this apply to a professor just beginning?
11. Much of the reading I have done in preparation for this project has referred to the responsibility of the professor/instructor not to inflict harm on the student, what could this be referring to? Is any degree of harm allowable?
12. Considering that you had mentioned earlier that you prefer the smaller classes (up to 40 students) do you believe that teaching might be compromised if the classes are larger?
13. Do you enjoy teaching, and if it were not a kind of requirement by the university would you willingly do it?
14. Within a university setting as a professor and then as a student what is the most important thing to walk away with?
15. What does a professor provide the students that a textbook could not? Could this perhaps be considered a form of entertainment?
16. What makes you enjoy teaching a course?
17. Why is creating a balance within the subject matter between those things that might push a student's beliefs and those things they feel comfortable with so important? If this does not happen is the course material ruined?
18. What is social convention? ** As mentioned in last talk.
19. What kind of harm are you referring to?
20. Are you concerned with leaving a legacy with your students?
21. Are you concerned about your teaching and the effect it has on the student?
22. If there were not such a strong emphasis places upon research by the department would teaching play a more important role? (examples of changes that might be made)

23. In our last talk you spoke about pedagogy, saying that you did not follow it. Could you speak specifically to what pedagogy means to you?
24. What do you feel the implications are of the fact the graduate level students are not interested in the more probative questions about topics? Are the questions that are asked at the undergrad level due more to their not understanding the same kinds of things that grad students do?
25. What is you definition of competency?
26. Can you speak more on what leaving your students unsettle means? What do you want them to walk away from the class thinking and feeling?
27. Is teaching compromised when class sizes are over the 20- 40 student range? And why is this range better than a seminar of 6-10?
28. What do you want students to leave your class with? (Simply information)
29. Are you concerned with what your teaching does to the students, thinking particularly of the killing class?